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August 2, 1881.

No. 90. VOL. IV.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS, 98 WILLIAM ST., N. Y.

PRICE, 5 CENTS

## The Author's Daughter.

BY MARY HOWITT.

### CHAPTER I.

MR. FRANK LAWFORD offended his family by three things. He turned author; he adopted liberal opinions in politics; he married a poor and nameless wife. Any one of those would have been bad enough, according to the hereditary notions of the Lawford family; but all these combined in one person was an unimaginable delinquency which the Lawfords could not forgive. But in order that our reader may have a more definite idea of this family, which had considered itself, *par excellence*, *sans reproche*, we must go back to the time of Peter Lawford, the old squire.

Peter Lawford, and his ancestors before him, had been members of the squirearchy of Leicestershire for some hundreds of years. The chancel vault was full of the bones of the Lawfords, male and female; and the church walls were covered with monumental tablets in marble and brass, commemorating their virtues and their greatness. The Lawfords of the fifteenth century endowed the grammar school; the Lawfords built the almshouses; the Lawfords had given, and still gave doles of beef and food to the poor at Christmas; they had always sat on the magisterial bench; they were in all trusts of bridges and turnpike roads for their part of the county. Lawfords also had sat in Parliament: they had served their king and country in the army and on sea; and, according to their belief, they served God also, by providing out of their own family a Lawford to occupy the living of Lawford, which, of course, was in their gift—a comfortable way it was of serving God, for the living had always been a good one, and, at the time of our story, amounted to £300 a year.

But whatever the Lawfords of former times had been as to wealth, Peter Lawford, when he came into possession of the estate, found that

its revenues were somewhat encumbered. Peter was the second son, and had been brought up to the law, for which he always entertained the highest regard; holding it as his firm opinion that, had fate left him to pursue his own course, he should have risen to the highest eminence. But fate made a country gentleman of him; and as it is a much easier and safer thing to regret the loss of greatness than to achieve it, Peter sat down contentedly on the broad lands of Lawford, to try to rid himself of the incumbrances which he never expected to find. The older Lawford had been a speculator before the true time for profitable speculation began, and therefore won for himself the character of insanity, because he laid down in his park an infant railroad, on which he had labored hard to perfect self-propelling carriages. He built velocipedes and constructed balloons, but, poor man, succeeded in nothing. He was one of those men with glimmerings of truth before the age is prepared to receive it; precursors of discoveries on the very verge of their birth. Had Mr. Lawford lived fifty years later he would have made his fortune and benefited society; as it was, he impoverished his family estate, and gained the reputation to himself of being brimful of crotchets, if not actually insane; and, what was still more disastrous, lost his life by the falling of a heavy beam, which had been inadequately fastened for the support of some ponderous machinery.

The world said that Mr. Peter Lawford, now the head of the family, was a strong-minded man; he believed so himself, nay, as we have hinted before, he had the highest possible idea of his own abilities, and in settling down on the estate resolved to clear off all incumbrances, and never to marry but with a woman of substance. It is wonderful what credit Peter's mode of action gained for him in the world; he was the

very model of prudence and practical wisdom; he was an oracle at quarter sessions where his law knowledge really stood him in stead. He was counsellor both to old and young, and soon found that not only did he stand high among fathers and uncles, and brothers and nephews, but among all ladies whether married or single. Having enjoyed all his triumph for ten long years, he all at once took it into his head to think about being married. Perhaps he might be a little stimulated to this by hearing one certain May morning that no less than six ladies of his acquaintance were to be married that summer. Ah, poor Peter, and one of the six, the very Miss Rutherford, the belle of the county, about whom he had been thinking for these last four years. Without exactly knowing what was his exact train of thought, we can only say that upon that very morning Peter rode over to the Rutherfords to ascertain his fate.

He found the brother of the young lady at home, and asked immediately from him if the report of his sister's approaching marriage was really true. Mr. Rutherford replied that he believed so, that he hoped so, but that the marriage settlements were not yet drawn.

Lawford walked up and down the room, as men do whose minds are agitated, made one or two ineffectual attempts to speak, and then resolutely mastering his feelings, begged that Mr. Rutherford would never betray the emotion which he witnessed; that from the bottom of his soul he wished nothing but the happiness of his amiable sister; that he had wished to clear his estate of the incumbrances with which his unfortunate brother had burdened it—he had hoped in a year or two—that it was a very painful thing to him—that his friend would understand him—and now the report of Miss Rutherford's approaching marriage had reached him. He had ridden over to ascertain the truth—and now, of course, he had nothing more to say. He offered his friend his hand, and apparently much affected, was about to leave the room.

"My good fellow," said Rutherford, "this is unfortunate—but you must not go thus. Sit down, I will say a word to you in confidence. Of this Colonel Wynn I know little, of his family, still less; he is an acquaintance which my wife and Alice made last winter at Bath. You, on the contrary, are an old friend—our families have been connected by marriage, and I will candidly tell you that I would rather that Alice had married you than any other man I know."

Lawford's countenance brightened. "Might he understand," he asked, "that the young lady herself entertained any sentiment of regard towards him?"

Mr. Rutherford refused to give a definite answer to that question, but added that if his friend were inclined to try his luck, he could honestly tell him that with all his heart he wished him success.

On that very day, as a matter of course, Mr. Lawford offered hand and heart to the fair Alice Rutherford. The lady blushed, wept, looked lovelier than ever; spoke of the awkward position of her affairs; of Colonel Wynn whom she esteemed as a friend, of his violent temper, of her dread of fearful consequences; wept again almost hysterically, and confessed with maiden shame, that Mr. Lawford was by far the dearer of her two lovers.

As she had anticipated, not many days elapsed before the tempestuous Colonel Wynn made his appearance at Lawford, the end of which was that two challenges were sent by him in one day; the one to her brother, the other to her new lover. The duels were fought, from which Mr. Rutherford and the colonel came off scathless, while Mr. Lawford received an injury in the left elbow, which after confining him for a few weeks left him with a stiff joint for the rest of his days. But this affair brought to him no other unpleasant consequences; on the contrary, he never apparently stood so high in the opinion of his country neighbors as when he first made his appearance again amongst them, with his arm in a sling, and as the affianced bridegroom of the beautiful Alice Rutherford.

### CHAPTER II.

Years went on, and prosperity seemed to belong to the Lawfords. All went smoothly and brightly as



"PERMIT ME TO BE YOUR ATTENDANT, AGNES," SAID MR. LATIMER, TAKING HER HAND.



on a summer's day, when, all at once, somebody put it into Mr. Lawford's head to offer himself as tory candidate for the county. Elections were long and fierce in those days, and the stories which old people tell of the bribery and corruption which took place, make those of the present time, the merest child's play. And of all the elections, that which Mr. Lawford carried has been always considered one of the most memorable. Little did Lawford think, when the idea first crossed his brain of offering himself, of the sum that it cost him; but such things have been before and since. The successful candidate finds, as the young Franklin did, that he has paid too dearly for his whistle.

Peter Lawford took his seat in parliament, and that part of the world which knew him expected great things from him. Mrs. Lawford, like her husband, prided herself on her good sense and good management, and in order, as she said, that the expense of two establishments might be saved, a house was taken in London, the estate put into the hands of a trusty bailiff, the house shut up and left in charge of a couple of servants on board-wages; and Lawford determined now in his parliamentary career, to turn his law education to account, and win to himself he knew not how much honor and advantage. For ten long years did he occupy his place in parliament, never absenting himself from a single sitting, and distinguished himself by his hot and unflinching adherence to every principle of tory policy, either at home or abroad. His speeches were remarkable for two things, their soporific quality and their great length—some witty members having been known to put their night-caps on when he rose to his feet. But this moved not Mr. Lawford a jot, nor did he despond after ten years of unrewarded service. If the ministry had remained in office only six months longer, he believed that he should have risen to the peerage. But the whigs came into office, and, after an unsuccessful attempt to be returned in the new parliament, he came to Lawford and a country life, very much the worse for his ten years of public labor.

Mrs. Lawford was by no means a lady of an economical turn, although she had talked of leaving Lawford and removing to London to save the expense of two houses and two establishments. But the establishment in London cost far more than that in the country could have done; and then there was the winter at Bath or Cheltenham for the benefit of the lady's health, and the cottage in the Isle of Wight or at Worthing for the children and their attendants. All this dipped deeply into the annual rents of Lawford, which were yet not clear from the late Mr. Lawford's debts and consumed, as if they had fallen into a vortex, all the emoluments, and fees, and bribes, which dropped one way and another into the pockets of the parliamentary man of business.

Mr. Lawford came back to the home of his fathers a much poorer, and a much more anxious man than he had left it. Besides which, he had been compelled, in order to pay off the most pressing of his election debts, to sell the next presentation of the living of Lawford, which was then held by his uncle, at that time eighty years of age, and a free liver into the bargain. It was a ready means of raising money, and fifteen thousand pounds was thus obtained. He had three sons of his own, the second of whom was, as a matter of course, destined to the church, and for this living in particular; nor had he any doubt but by the time this young man was ready for his clerical duties, that fate or favorable circumstances would have cleared the way for him. But fate was hard, and favorable circumstance was none; for at the very time when the second son, Adolphus, the destined incumbent of Lawford, was in his twenty-first year, the old incumbent, or incumbrance, rather, was in his ninety-fourth, a hale old man, who prided himself on reading without spectacles. It was a serious thing to the Lawfords, but a much more serious thing to the Rev. Mr. Colville, who, ten years before,

had sunk all his worldly wealth, even more than he then possessed, to purchase this next presentation, which every one reckoned as good as his own on the day of purchase.

It is a proverb, that if you give an old woman an annuity, she will live for ever; so said the Rev. Mr. Colville a thousand times, only varying the proverb to suit his own case. The Lawfords were making a good figure in London, while the poor Colvilles, who had beggared themselves for the sake of their purchase, were struggling in a small curacy, with a large family and the most oppressive worldly anxieties. Old Humphrey Lawford would not die! It was in vain that Mr. and Mrs. Colville looked over the list of deaths in the daily papers; die he would not, and Mr. Colville had no influential connections to assist him. His very heart was sick of hope deferred; and so the bloom wore off his life and his hair grew gray, and his wife lost her cheerful looks and her placid temper, and it almost seemed to them that they would die themselves before this old incumbent who was now ninety-two.

One, two, three years went on, and the school that the poor curate had now kept for some years, ebbed and flowed with a very uncertain current, till, in the very half-year when Peter Lawford's parliamentary life came to a close without any golden sunset, a little scholar brought into the school the scarlet-fever, and one scholar, the son of his best supporter, died together with the youngest of his own children, the pet and darling of his cheerless heart. The cup of their misfortune and their misery seemed full. The last drop was in and it already flowed over.

The evening, however, on which the children were buried, a post letter brought the long expected news—old Humphrey Lawford was dead.

"Blessed be the Lord, inasmuch as his hand is yet stretched out to save us!" ejaculated the heart-stricken clergyman, as he laid down the letter, feeling, nevertheless, in the sorrowful depths of his heart, as if the time of rejoicing was gone forever from him.

"Oh that poor Jeanie had but lived!" groaned the mother, as she read the letter which her husband had laid down. Her eye caught her husband's; heart understood heart, and clasping each other in a long embrace, they wept together.

### CHAPTER III.

THE very day on which the Colvilles, in their deep mourning, and with their grief-subdued countenances, took possession of their long-expected home, the Lawford family came back to the old hall. It was a sore thought to Mr. Lawford and his wife, that here was a man hardly arrived at middle life, at that very moment come into the possession of that heritage which, from his childhood upward, they had regarded as the patrimony of their second son; and what if he lived to the age of old Humphrey? and he might do so, sailing thus, like a ship after a stormy voyage, into a haven of blessed repose. What prospect was there then for poor Adolphus? "Poor Adolphus!" sighed they whenever they thought of the rectory: "Poor Adolphus!" whenever they thought on the young man himself; for even they, with all the partiality of parents were forced to confess, that Adolphus was the least gifted of all their offspring, and who, on the fat living of Lawford, might have kept a curate, and with the patronage and forbearance of his own family, might have gone respectably through life, but who otherwise could not look even to be another man's curate. Another vexatious thing there was, and it was a very vexatious thing; old Humphrey Lawford, who had been a bachelor all his days, and never had spent the half of his income, and who had indulged in but one luxury, that of buying books, had left behind him a most unsatisfactory will. He had left his library to his own college; his money in the funds to four public societies; and all his furniture, and all his personal property to his

forty years' housekeeper. Not one penny came to his nephew or his family! Mr. Lawford literally begrudged the cost of family mourning.

The Lawford family were four. George, the eldest, a young man, whose gay college life had caused his father great displeasure, and was now placed rather on the shady side of his affections. The second was the only daughter Camilla, somewhat turned of twenty, a very well-bred and highly accomplished young lady, as every one said, and her father's favorite. Camilla was much more remarkable for her wit and her talents than for her beauty, being the plainest of the family—the only one, indeed, who had not inherited the fine Rutherford eyes and cast of countenance. Her complexion was dark; her eyes gray, with a keen intelligence in them, perfectly in accordance with her well-cut and firmly-closing mouth.

"It is a pity that Camilla is not a boy!" said her mother, when she saw how, by an absolute love of rule, and a natural force of character, she, as a little girl, had governed her brothers and those about her. As Camilla grew up, very little was said of her amiability. She was too cold, too selfish, too fond of power, ever to be much loved; but love was not the thing that she very much cared about. If she had power, that would give her an influence and a consideration which suited her much better. One characteristic, however, there was in her, which was praiseworthy; and that was the kindness and attention she always bestowed upon her small, gifted brother Adolphus. Adolphus seemed ever more dependent upon her than upon his parents; he looked up to her as to a superior being, and she took his part, with all her natural strength of will, in all his follies and his weaknesses. Of course, Camilla could not be expected to look upon the newly-arrived family at the rectory with any forbearance; she was more vehement against them than her parents, and declared that she would never sit under the preaching of a man whom she and all her family had such good reason to dislike.

Five years younger than Adolphus was Frank, the last of the family, and the most highly gifted. As a little child, he had been the privileged disturber of his father's study, even in the most occupied days of his parliamentary life. He was his mother's darling, and was taken out with her shopping and making morning calls, when the prudent matrons of her acquaintance thought that he would have been much better occupied over his lessons. But Frank learned, Heaven knows how, although the good clergyman, with whom he was said to be a weekly boarder, complained quite as much of non-attendance as he would have done of non-payment.

"Frank has a splendid head, if there be any truth in phrenology," said his father, many a time, putting aside the bright curls from his beautiful forehead; "and it will be his own fault if he do not make a figure in the world."

"Frank has the noblest of hearts," said his mother, with a tearful eye, to her friends; "he is the flower of our flock, and will outshine his elder brothers in intellect; but that is of less consequence, because they may be reckoned as provided for, and therefore it is but just that my boy has Benjamin-portion of natural gifts."

Mr. Lawford remembering with pleasure his own life as a law-student, and cherishing the idea that he himself was a Lord-Chancellor lost, destined Frank for the bar.

"He will make a figure there," said his mother, "for he has natural eloquence, quite a style of his own, and the keenest insight into everything. He was born for a lawyer."

People said, and wise people too, that the foolish admiration of his parents would be the ruin of young Lawford. But there are some natures that take a deal of spoiling, and Frank was one of them. He was not spoiled at seventeen, even though he knew well enough that he was considered much cleverer than his elder brothers, and that it was the general opinion, too, that he had a much finer disposition, and was handsome as a youth, and



promised to be very handsome as a man. Spoiled he was not; but then neither was he improved by it. Vanity, that ill-weed and that offspring of weakness, was fostered in his nature, and thus more mortification, and a severer self-discipline, were stored up for him in after life.

Had his sister Camilla been of a nature less dominant, she perhaps might best have managed a disposition like her young brother's. Camilla, with her keen insight into character, was early aware of the fine talents and nature of the boy; and, as was natural, took upon herself to school and train him, never concealing, however, that it was rather to gratify her own love of power than anything else. Hence, between these two, there existed a continual species of warfare, a strife for mastery, which was conducive neither to their own nor the family happiness. Their mother, desirous above all things for peace, coaxed the one and scolded the other, and always without success.

"Now, Frank, my angel," his mother would say, stroking the beautiful cheeks of the handsome youth, "what is the sense of opposing your sister in this way? Sing this duet with her; it is but a small thing, and if you love me you will do it!"

"If it were for love of you, I would do it, and ten times more," Frank would reply, "and, as you say, it is not much, but then Camilla has said that I *shall* do it. *Shall* is a law with Camilla, and if I submit once I must submit a hundred times,—it is not 'as you will,' but 'as I will,' with Camilla!"

And "How can you be so tyrannical with poor Frank," her mother would say to her, in an angry tone, "as to have him up, morning, noon, and night, at that everlasting duet? You have not a spark of reason or consideration in you. Let *my* will be done, is your motto, without any regard to another's feelings!"

"Frank is a spoiled child," Camilla would reply, resolutely: "and will do nothing that does not offer incense to his vanity. The discipline I would now subject him to, would spare him trouble in after life; it would be his greatest happiness to submit to me. He would have to thank me for it. He has great talents, but they will all run to waste from want of steady purposes. To what does he apply himself steadily—to nothing! And I know that I am right in requiring him to sing this duet with me, even if it were ten times more disagreeable!"

Mrs. Lawford had always the worst of an argument with her daughter, and from such controversy as this she mostly retired, to persuade Frank to compliance, or to be witness to an unhappy strife between her two strong-willed children.

It was in the maturity of spring, towards the latter end of the merry month of May, that the Lawfords returned, and the rector's family took possession of their new home. Happily for Frank, his own family, and Camilla in particular, were so much occupied in attending to their own concerns, as not to have much time to think about him. He therefore was for a time left to his own free-will to range about the wide manor of Lawford; to find the primroses growing fresh on the mossy banks of woody dingles, and the yellow cowslips and purple violets in the grassy fields; and take his rod and line, and first essay the gentle craft of angling in the little babbling streams, which, whilst they had all the charm of being full of the early and else forgotten memories of childhood, had at the same time all the fascination and charm of novelty. What a blessed thing it seemed to him, to throw himself down here under the branches of a tree, covered with the young tender leaves of the season, and reading some glorious books of poetry or poetical literature, feel himself as it were a free man, caring nothing for the domination of Camilla. The soul of a poet in those joyous days first awoke within him; and, without being able, had he tried to define or describe his feelings, he found that a well-spring of happiness and tender and lofty emotion lay within him, which the rejoicing carol of the skylark, or the gushing sunlight through the delicate leaves, could call forth. At such times,

his whole soul was a fountain of deep love; and even the stern proud Camilla appeared before him softened and glorified.

Weeks went on; and during this time, Frank had advanced in knowledge of many things. Between his family and the rectory, as we said before, there existed a coldness, an unfriendly feeling; rather, however, it must be confessed, on the side of Mr. Lawford than the clergyman's. Camilla, who, among her other characteristics, was very polemically inclined, soon discovered that Mr. Colville was not an evangelical preacher, and therefore gave herself the trouble of going five miles every Sunday, to attend the ministry of a neighboring clergyman, with whom and his family she formed a close intimacy. This new acquaintance, to the comfort of poor Frank, occupied her mind, and removed her from home a good deal; so that he was left, in his turn, so make acquaintance, which he very soon found to be as much to his taste as his sister's was to hers.

Within the park of Lawford, or rather at its edge, stood the church, about a quarter of a mile from the Hall. The church was remarkably picturesque, with its tall gray tower of good proportions, and fine style of architecture, and surrounded by its little quiet field of graves. Frank found much to interest and please him in this sacred little spot; and yet, when there, was never so much occupied by his poetic musings, as not to have an eye to spare for the rectory grounds, which bounded one side of it, and which, from one particular part of the churchyard, lay open to view. The first time Frank was here, he saw the rector's daughter, a fair, slight girl, walking in the garden, surrounded by a tribe of young brothers and sisters. His first thought was, what a large family the rector had; his second how interesting was that fair sister, who, all unconscious of a stranger's observations, seemed like the spirit of affection and tenderness. Day after day, Frank visited that particular corner of the churchyard, sometimes seeing different members of the family, sometimes not. He was remarkably regular in his attendance at church, though his family was not so; nor did he allow himself to be the least in the world prejudiced against their new neighbors, even though "poor Adolphus," through them, would stand in want of a home.

The rector's young people, however, like Frank, soon discovered that there were very charming dingles, where primroses grew, in various parts of the park and hills in the neighborhood, where fine views might be obtained over the country; and it was not very long before some or other of them met with him, or he with them. From these meetings an intimacy grew up. Frank undertook to be their guide here and there; and they, in their turn, made him soon feel that without him, a rural excursion could afford them very little pleasure.

The rector and his lady, who, after so many years of waiting, anxiety, and sorrow, had now anchored, as it were, in this sunny bay of life, could afford to be in good humor with all the world. Right excellent people were they, said every one, rich and poor alike; and, though it was some little cause of regret to them, that the squire and his lady were among the most negligent of his parishioners in their attendance at church, and their daughter had, in the most pointed manner, withdrawn herself from under his pastoral care, yet that was no reason why the rector in his office of pastor of his flock, should send out, as it were, the sheep-dog of his anger, barking after his lukewarm or even stray sheep. No, his plan was to keep his eye on them, in kindness and good-will, and not to obtrude himself on their notice, other than by good offices. A desire, therefore, to influence the parents through the son, perhaps made him receive Frank with the greatest kindness and endeavor that all his visits to the rectory should be as agreeable as possible. To his mother, Frank spoke of his intimacy at the rectory, and of his pleasant visits there, but to no one else; and his mother well pleased that he should meet with agreeable associates, was entirely satisfied, and began even to meditate upon placing her

son under the rector's care, instead of sending him at present to any public school.

In this way Frank knew the Colville family, old and young, and used to amuse and interest his mother by his anecdotes of the interior of the rectory. He was a great favorite with the rector's lady, because he amused the little children. He cut mice out of apple pippins, and swans out of apples themselves; made skipping-rats with his rolled-up pocket-handkerchief, and rabbits on the wall with his hands. He was a most amusing companion to them, and nothing delighted them more than to see him between the garden-trees by the fish-pond. The one, however, who evinced most pleasure in his society, though that not with the vociferation of the younger children, was that fair, slender girl who had first made the rectory-lawn so interesting to him. With Emma he sat for hours, reading to her as she sat at work, or in quiet and very lover-like conversation. Frank was seventeen, a tall stripling, Emma was a year his senior; on his part, at least, it was a very tender and a very warm flame. From Emma he soon heard, as well as from the younger children and their parents, of John, the eldest of the family. John was turned three-and-twenty, and was at college—at the very college where his own brothers were. It seemed to him a remarkable coincidence. The whole family, old and young, were enthusiastic in his praise. "Brother John," said the children, "gave them this book; taught them that accomplishment; devised for them that pleasure; oh, there was no one in this world like brother John!" Emma joined in the same paean to his praise. John had been the associate of all her pleasures, the consoler in all her troubles. He was so clever, so gay! They should have such delightful times when John came home!

To hear Emma and the younger ones talk of this wonderful brother, Frank fancied a light-hearted, merry youth, full of fun and frolic, beside whom he should be a very monk for sedateness. To hear the parents, however, speak of him, a very different idea was suggested. John had been his father's pupil, grave, and steady, and precocious. Latin and Greek had been to him mere child's play. He had been usher in his father's school when only fifteen. He had lived with his parents, not as their child, but as their friend and adviser. But, great as had been John's virtues at home, his college-life had even exhibited his character to greater advantage. He had struggled through poverty and hardship; had been untempted by pleasure; and now, by great ability and most unheard of industry, had carried all honors before him; had won the regard of the heads of the college, and the esteem of his fellow collegians. He had now taken his degree, and had won also for himself a fast friend and sure patron in the son of Earl —, a young man of great promise and virtue. Frank thought of his own brothers, whose college-lives had caused his parents such uneasiness and trouble—of the gay, thoughtless George, whose debts had for the present turned his father's heart from him, and of poor Adolphus, who had not sense enough to keep out of scrapes. The next college vacation John Colville would be at home—at that new home, the prosperity of which was the more welcome on his account.

Frank thought of John Colville night and day, and set him up as a sort of ideal model to himself. He, too, he resolved, would distinguish himself; he, too, would endeavor to be the pride and blessing of his family.

At length the time came which was to bring the young collegians home—the young spend-thrifts to the Hall, and the hard-working and honor-crowned John to the rectory. Very little was said at the Hall about the expected arrivals there; the father was out of humor; the mother uneasy; and Camilla, who, when her elder brothers were concerned, admitted a rival idea with her new evangelical notions, alert and determined, yet silent.

Frank went to the rectory the evening before the day on which John was expected. He felt more impatient to see him than his brothers.



John Colville was to him the name of a dear friend; he felt already to love him; he thought how he would freely open his heart to him, and ask counsel from him of many things which as yet lay in dim perspective before him. His idea of John Colville was that of intellectual force and spiritual beauty. He thought of Milton, and Philip Melancthon, and Fenelon, and Luther, and those fine spirits who were the idols of his heart's worship, whenever he thought of him.

He went, not expecting to find him arrived, but merely because his heart impelled him to tell his friends that he would think of them on the morrow. Scarcely, however, was he within the garden-gate, when Emma Colville came bounding towards him, exclaiming that John was come; and then out came rushing the younger children to tell him the same thing; and when he said how glad he was, how delighted they must be, all their faces grew serious, and they said, "Oh, but John was going away on the morrow, was going out of England, for they knew not how long!"

By this time, Frank, with a beating heart and a crimsoning brow and cheek, had entered the dining-room by the open French window to which Mr. Colville had beckoned him, and the next moment he stood before John Colville. And this then was he! A short, stiff, solidly-built young man, with a compactly put-together head, thickly covered with short crisped black hair; a forehead of great strength rather than beauty, which rose above a pair of deep-set, small, dark eyes, of a grave, intelligent, yet rather cold expression; a remarkably well-formed nose and mouth that looked as if chiselled out of granite. There was an iron-gray tinge about the lower part of the face which indicated a strong, black beard, but all this, even to the whiskers, was closely shaved, revealing the clear, strong curve of the jaw, which added an expression of force to this remarkable, but not altogether pleasing countenance. The dress exactly suited the character of the face, there was no foppery or nonsense of any kind, about it. All was plain and in excellent keeping. He was evidently, as Frank saw at a glance, one of the *rare aves*—an old head on young shoulders; such a son could be no other than his father's friend and confidant; but he felt that years would never make him as intimate with the son as months only had with the father. Mr. Colville and his son were in deep conversation together, as the mother, taking Frank by the hand, led him up to them. "This is our young friend, Frank Lawford, John," said she.

"Ah, Frank, my boy," said the rector, "we've got John among us at last, you see!"

John gave his hand, spoke a few civil words, eyed Frank for a moment with his searching glance from head to foot; and then, as if he had quite satisfied himself, turned again to his father and pursued the conversation which had been interrupted. Poor Frank's enthusiasm felt as if blown upon by an icy wind; he withdrew a few paces. Mrs. Colville was listening to her son and so were the girls; even Emma did not seem to have a thought to spare for him; he felt that he was not wanted, and, making his adieus, very unobtrusively withdrew. He felt that he had no right to be disappointed in John Colville; he was exactly the sort of person he might have expected, a strong-minded, clear-headed, independent sort of man. Frank, however, fancied that he looked cold-blooded and calculating, and wanting in that generous enthusiasm which was his own characteristic. He recalled to his memory all that had been told of his high virtue, his self-denial, his industry, his devotion to his family, his honorable life at college, the distinction and the friendship he had won. Yes, all this was very noble, Frank could not but acknowledge; and yet some way he felt that after all his golden idol was but a mixture of clay.

In a day or two, his brother Adolphus returned: George preferred absenting himself; and with Adolphus came much news and talk of John Colville. According to him, John Colville was the most time-serving sycophant in all Oxford; he had been the merest lickspittle

to the Earl of —'s son, with whom he was about to set out as traveling companion. Adolphus might himself have won honors had it not been for this young man, this son of the very person who was keeping him out of his heritage! Camilla took the part of her brother; her inveteracy against the rector's family was hotter than ever; and then it came out that she had not been in ignorance, but had only connived at Frank's intimacy there. Camilla had her way. Frank's little friendship on his own account was thwarted; but, as was natural, his little love affair grew only the more interesting. Emma and he exchanged locks of hair; he wrote to her the most touching little poems; and after Christmas he was sent to a great public school, preparatory to his college life.

Twelve months after this time, when Frank came home for his vacation, he found very extraordinary things going forward. But these require a word of explanation. After Frank left, as was only natural, the coldness continued between the families at the Hall and the rectory. In a while news came that the earl's son, with whom John Colville had been traveling, and whose health had for many years been delicate, had died in Italy, leaving to his friend and his companion a legacy of five thousand pounds; and that the earl, his father, had given him the next presentation to a good living, which was expected to fall vacant almost daily. "That young man is bound to be fortunate," said all the world.

His return to his family made quite a sensation through the neighborhood, and even among Camilla's evangelical friends. Camilla herself, it must be presumed, became interested by all she heard; but, for the sake of consistency, she was very bitter in her remarks upon him. Camilla was a clever diplomatist; and John Colville had not been long at the rectory with his grave, self-possessed manner, his independent bearing, and his deep mourning, before she found herself animated by the most lively zeal to have all the poor children in the parish educated. This could not be done without the sanction and assistance of the clergyman; and to him she went, begging his advice and co-operation. Nothing could have pleased the rector more: he and Camilla worked hard at the school; and from this day no one was more intimate at the rectory than herself. She became quite eloquent against herself, and the mischief which prejudice of any kind does in society; it was her bounden duty to acknowledge it; and nothing that she could do was too much for her new, dear friends. She talked to them of "poor Adolphus," and they admired her sisterly affection, her spirit, her candor, her good sense, her decision of character. They saw nothing but virtues in her; and more than this, it was not long before John Colville was seen coming and going between the rectory and the Hall, before he and Camilla were seen walking together arm in arm in deep confidential discourse. The world jumped to no false conclusion when it said, that the rector's son and the squire's daughter would one day be married.

This was the news that met Frank on his return home. Why was he somehow vexed about it? He could not satisfactorily answer that question to himself. At the rectory he was received with the greatest kindness; but somehow he felt in the depths of his soul a melancholy presentiment that when Camilla was the caressed and flattered, and favored daughter-in-law elect, the chosen of the idol John, he could never occupy the place he had done. Even Emma seemed changed, and charged him before the assembled family with undervaluing Camilla. The whole family were clamorous in lauding Camilla's generosity, warm-heartedness, and unselfishness, those very qualities which he had thought her deficient in, and were ready to quarrel with him because of them. Emma was to be Camilla's bridesmaid, and they, too, were inseparable, —besides which, she seemed to have imbibed a cordial interest for "poor Adolphus;" and whether it was wounded vanity or becoming self-respect, Frank quietly withdrew himself,

recalling to his mind the repulsive sentiment he at first had felt in the pattern John Colville, and thinking that he must be contented to give up his friends and to endure the blighting of his first love, and that was all.

To no soul but to his mother did he open his heart, and that only so far as regarded his future brother-in-law.

"John Colville is a clever man of the world," said she. "Camilla and he are admirably suited for each other. If John should ever be a bishop—and he is likely enough—Camilla will put the mitre on his brows; and, thank God, between them they will take care of 'poor Adolphus!'"

The day of Camilla's marriage arrived. The children of the newly-established schools scattered flowers in her path; and the bride and bridegroom returned to the Hall to partake a wedding-breakfast with the united families. Nothing could be gayer than all around them; bells ringing, sun shining, and the various members of the two families exchanging congratulations. At the "head of the table" sat Mrs. Lawford, smiling and gay; she had excited and exerted herself much on this occasion. All at once she was seen to make an attempt to rise, and then she sank back into her chair, and, laying her hand on her side, exclaimed, "Oh, God! my heart, my heart!"

A flush for one moment covered her countenance, and then a change passed over it, and a palor as of death. She was a large, heavy woman, and was with difficulty removed to the sofa. A physician was instantly fetched; he attempted to bleed her; but human aid was vain. She died of an affection of the heart, under which she had long labored, in the fifty-seventh year of her age. No conception can be formed of the effects of this shock in the midst of bridal festivity and joy.

"Oh, my mother!" exclaimed Frank, falling on his knees before her, and clasping her hand, with a convulsive burst of sorrow, to his lips,—"no one loved you as I did; no one will mourn for you as I shall!"

Frank said right—no one mourned her so deeply as he did. Years did not remove the effect from his spirit; nay, his whole life bore traces of it; and those traces, like the seed sown in good ground, produced a harvest for the garner of heaven.

At the moment of Mrs. Lawford's death, the bride and bridegroom were about to set out on a marriage tour of some months, at the end of which time they hoped the living destined for them would be ready. Camilla, however, promptly, find at that moment properly, decided that the tour should be given up, for that she could not leave her family in this sudden distress. At first her father, thankful for the assistance of his strong-minded daughter, resigned everything to her management; but when, as his mind recovered its usual tone, he saw how completely Mr. and Mrs. John Colville were the masters there, he roused himself, and quietly intimated that this was not their permanent home. Camilla's permanent home was not, however, ready for her; and making yet an effort to retain her power, her father wrote to his son George, who now had been living so long under his displeasure, inviting him to return and assist him henceforth in the management of his affairs. George, who by this time had sown all his wild oats, accepted his father's invitation with unbounded joy, and within a few days presented himself at Lawford, to the surprise of his sister, who knew nothing of what her father had done. The father and son met with the utmost affection and confidence; and from this Camilla understood her father's real intentions. Not a hint, however, did she give of this; but speaking only of the pleasure she and her husband would now have in being released to attend to their own duties, made her retreat with all the dignity of entire conquest.

#### CHAPTER IV.

YEARS went on. George married much to his father's wishes, and grandchildren sat on



the old man's knees. As was expected, Camille and her husband, now Dr. Colville, provided for Adolphus; and this made her family regard her with unbounded gratitude. "She is a wonderful woman," said her brother George. "She has the credit of the family so at heart," said her father—"has never let the world know of poor Adolphus' deficiencies; and even when he married a farmer's daughter, took the young woman under her care, and made a complete gentlewoman of her!" "A really noble character is Aunt Colville," said young Mrs. Lawford to her children; thinking that, as Aunt Colville had none of her own, her sons and daughters could not do better than be such to her. "Never fail in deference to your aunt, and only try to be as clever a woman as she is?"

Dr. Colville was now an archdeacon. All the world bore testimony to his talents and his ambition. Churchmen said that he was fit to be an archbishop; that his controversial writings placed him at the head of all polemical writers whatever; that he was one of the stanchest pillars of the church and state; that he was proud and ambitious to be sure, but then he had the zeal of an apostle. Dissenters and radicals, and such like people, said that Dr. Colville was the most bigoted zealot of the present day; a proud, hot-headed churchman; an upholder of every corruption of church and state; a man no more fitted to preach and teach the doctrines and practices of the humble, self-denying son of the poor carpenter, than Judas Iscariot himself, who sold him for money, as Dr. Colville and such men did!

Frank ever since his law studies had begun, had lived in London, apart from his family. They pursued their course, and he his, every passing year making the distance between them in many respects greater and greater. He was called to the bar, and his family began to listen, somewhat impatiently, for the reports of his law-reputation. "What is Frank doing?" asked old Mr. Lawford of his eldest son; and his eldest son answered him by merely repeating the question, and somehow or other, they obtained from somewhere a very unsatisfactory answer. Frank had left the bar and turned—what had he turned? A shopkeeper? No! A Methodist preacher? No; worse even than that—he had turned an author! An author! repeated some individual of the family; well, well, after all that might not be so very bad. He had perhaps been writing on the practice or usage of law; whole libraries of books have been written about law, and all books must have authors.

No, no! Frank had not written on law; Frank had written a poem—and a novel! these anonymously. No wonder he got no briefs! and now he had come out in his own name, as the author of some strange book which nobody could rightly understand, and yet which everybody was reading.

The good people at Lawford regarded an author as some sort of a disreputable character: a combination of extravagance and poverty. Authors were people who never had a shilling to bless themselves with; who sat shivering in garrets, with blankets pinned round them, writing for their daily bread, which they were never able to win. Old Mr. Lawford, in his reading days, had read Johnson's "Lives of the Poets." The life of Savage was the only one he distinctly remembered; but that, and the print of Hogarth's poor author, which, with the rest of the set, hung in the dining-room at the hall, furnished him with his idea of authors. Duns and printers' devils besieged their doors; they were people who always were in debt for their lodgings and their green-groceries. Professional men, and county families, could not associate with authors, penny-a-liners, and poor devils! George, who never had been a reader, adopted his father's notions, and thought, of a truth, that Frank was disgracing the family. The only periodicals that came to Lawford were the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review*; the *Gentleman's* never condescended to speak of Frank's publications; but the *Quarterly* contained a regular slashing and cutting-up ar-

ticle on his last work. It was full of bitter personal sarcasm; taunted, and jeered, and ridiculed, and then, instead of proof from the volume, gave mutilated passages, in italics and Roman capitals, so that the very author might blush at his words. The Lawfords felt as if the whole family was cut up, root and branch, by this article.

"I shall never show my face again in public!" said old Mr. Lawford.

"Frank has disgraced us all!" exclaimed George, in a towering passion.

By the next post letters from Lawford reached the author, expressing the family displeasure at this his unimaginable folly. In return Frank sent them reviews on the other side; but these they never read. He knew whom he had to thank for the invective in the *Quarterly*—it was Archbishop Colville; but he made no remonstrance to him, for he had long known that he and his brother-in-law could not be expected to think alike. Camilla wrote to him a dictatorial and yet a half-flattering letter, acknowledging his talents and upbraiding him for the abuse of them. His reply to her was in the words of Scripture: "Let not him who hath put his hand to the plough turn back to the house to fetch his clothes." Camilla said it was a misapplication of Scripture; it was an abuse of holy things; it was almost blasphemy; and while her brother remained in that temper, he must take his own course and the consequences of it.

Frank was not much surprised by the letters from his family: he knew that this, his new course of life, involved their displeasure, perhaps entire alienation from him. This, however painful, he must bear. Frank saw many things very differently from what they did. At the same time that he did not, by any means, undervalue wealth, or rank, or worldly distinction, there were other things which he valued more highly—truth, justice, and the peace of his own mind; and these seemed to have called him into the ranks of literature, despised though this vocation might be by his family. Nevertheless, like every young author, he doubted not but that his course would be a brilliant one; and that he should achieve fortune at the same time that he achieved fame and honor. Ah, poor Lawford! he was young in those days; and, though his glowing, youthful enthusiasm prophesied truly of the glory and usefulness of the future, it told him nothing of sleepless nights, and weary days of labor and disappointment, and weariness of brain, and anxiety that would not be allayed. Of these it told him nothing: his sister Camilla was the raven that croaked of all these things; and his father, to whom she sent copies of all her letters, repeated the doleful note. But Frank Lawford was incorrigible; and, after some time, the family made up their minds to bear, as philosophically as they could, the disgrace of being connected with a poor, thriftless author; giving him, as their parting words, the intelligence, that having willfully turned his back on the path of honorable independence, if not of distinction, which they had chosen for him, he must never look to them for countenance or assistance.

Time went on; and then it came suddenly into the heads of sundry people, that George Lawford, Esquire, of Lawford, would most ably represent their interests in parliament; and accordingly he was warmly solicited to allow himself to be nominated. His father thought of his own parliamentary life, now lying behind him at the distance of many years, and to him it seemed encircled with a golden halo. Yes, his son, his favorite son, as he now called him, must certainly serve his country, as his father had done before him. George was not unwilling: Dr. and Mrs. Colville warmly seconded it; but then came a difficulty—George was no public speaker; the election would be contested violently; there was a deal of popular talent on the other side; pamphlets and broadsides were already in circulation; George must have some one beside him who could write and even speak for him. "If I had only Frank's powers!" said George. Mrs. Colville had thought the same thing, and so had her husband; and then, as

by a simultaneous impulse of mind, the whole family conclave spoke out. Would it not be as well to make use of Frank? there had been displeasure enough shown by them. To be sure, Frank might have served them just as well, had he been a barrister; but then, as he chose to be an author, why not make use of him? Poor Frank! no doubt he would embrace, with joy, such an opportunity of reconciliation with his family; and then, when his brother was in parliament, he might be able to do something for him; and, as this unfortunate *cacoethes scribendi* seemed natural to him, they must have a little charity towards him, just as they would if he had a crooked spine. "To be sure we must," said Mrs. Colville, who had come to the Hall for the occasion, "we must all remember that Frank is our own flesh and blood!"

His father wrote to him immediately a letter at Camilla's dictation. A good deal was said of his delinquency; of his having run counter to the wishes of his father, of the grief which his pertinacity had occasioned, and of the willingness there was, notwithstanding, in the parental heart, to pity and to forgive. Now, he was told, an opportunity offered to serve his brother George in his own peculiar way; and by serving George, to oblige his family. His family were willing, the letter said, to make this occasion the means of family union; the past should be forgotten, and good understanding henceforward exist among them. The whole affair was then explained to him; and he was desired immediately to come down, so that, on the spot, he might employ all his powers for the service of his brother.

Instead of going down, however, as requested, Frank replied by letter to the family proposal of peace; and this letter fell like a thunderbolt among them. It was a long and eloquent letter; a letter full of affection, and which had not been written without emotion. The purport of it was, that much as Frank desired a reunion with his family, willing as he would be, at any personal risk to himself, to serve any one of them; yet, he grieved to say, that in this one particular alone he could do nothing. The most honest and single-minded inquiry after truth, had led him to adopt political opinions opposite to those of his family. It was a matter of principle and duty with him, not of pleasure or will; and that, however painful it was to differ or separate himself in any way from those with whom natural affection allied him, he had no alternative, if they regarded his conduct as offensive; because every principle of religion and duty would force him to adhere to what he considered as truth.

No words can describe the wrath and indignation and scorn which this letter produced. He was a traitor to God and to his family. This was what his abandonment of a gentlemanly profession had led him to! They knew that it would lead to no good; Dr. Colville had said, from the first, that there was nothing but rank radicalism in his books, however disguised; he was a disgrace to the family! and it was a thousand pities that ever they had asked his assistance.

The most angry letters were sent him in reply. His father disowned him as his son; Mrs. Colville as her brother; George foretold the loss of his own election through him; and even poor Adolphus put forth a feeble philippic.

As George had foretold, he lost his election; and lost with it a deal of money, which made it harder still to bear: all of which, as a matter of course, was ascribed to Frank.

## CHAPTER V.

FRANK LAWFORD had yet a third sin to commit, and that was his marriage; but a peculiar event led to that, which we must relate. He was walking one day along Harley street, when a horse in a private little carriage, in which an elderly lady was seated, took flight, and almost immediately dashed it to pieces against some impediment in the road. The lady was in the utmost alarm and danger; when Frank, without a moment's consideration for himself, rushed forward, and bore her in his arms to a place of



safety. Every one admired his promptitude and presence of mind. The old lady was most grateful; and, giving her address, begged him to call upon her. This led to an intimate acquaintance. She unfolded to him her particular circumstances; told him that she had no immediate connections in the world, excepting an old Scots cousin, with whom, as a child, she had been brought up. To him she had left the bulk of her property, and to his children, one of whom was a missionary in the East Indies; another, a clergyman in Scotland; and the third, a daughter, who gained her living as a daily governess. The father and daughter lived in London; but a misunderstanding of some years' existence kept them apart. The old gentleman was, in case she died without a will, her heir-at-law; but it was her intention, she said to surprise him by her liberality. She knew him very well, and his proud spirit; he would not come near her, lest he should seem to be courting her favor; but she would be his and his children's benefactor after all. But there was more to leave, the old lady went on to say, than what she meant for the Macintyres: she should have a residuary legatee, and perhaps—and with this she nodded and said, that Mr. Frank would never have reason to regret having risked himself to save her. There was something very cordial and maternal about this old Mrs. Vaughan; and, in reply to all her inquiries respecting his family and his prospects, he frankly told all—that he was disowned by his family, and why. Mrs. Vaughan was herself a radical in politics—Heaven help her! She went a long way beyond Frank; advocated universal suffrage, and universal equality in every way, for rich and poor, black and white, man and woman, alike. All that was good and right as a principle; but then, Mrs. Vaughan was very extreme in her opinions for all that: thought that women should choose their own husbands very much more independently than they now did; and that they should sit in parliament as well as men. It was on these subjects, she said, that she and her cousin Macintyre had quarreled. Frank was the least in the world startled when he saw, in this lady, the exaggerated reflex of his own opinion; but he nevertheless made her a present of a handsomely bound set of his own works, which she very carefully read and criticized very freely. At Mrs. Vaughan's, Frank met a certain Mr. Morgan, an author likewise by profession, a round-faced, sallow-complexioned young man, of very obsequious and deferential manners; but whose political and general opinions much more accorded with the old lady's than his own. Frank felt a sort of instinctive dislike to Morgan; Morgan's ultra notions seemed to create a reaction in his mind; and long, and often very warm, were the arguments between them in Mrs. Vaughan's presence, where alone he met Morgan, and to please and flatter whom Frank suspected these opinions to be held.

Like old Mr. Macintyre, Frank felt frequently a sort of delicacy in going uninvited to Mrs. Vaughan's, lest it should seem to be for selfish ends; besides which, the society of Morgan, whom he was always sure to meet there, was extremely distasteful to him.

One day when Frank had been absent a whole month, received a note from the house-keeper, informing him that Mrs. Vaughan was very ill and wished to see him. He found her evidently sinking fast; she was still sensible, pressed his hand, reproached him for his long absence, and spoke with tears of her gratitude. Morgan was not there; and with a feeling of self-reproach for having really neglected her—she, who had been as a mother to him when his own father and family had cast him off—he resolved, during the rest of her life, to devote himself to her. He stayed with her the whole day; read prayers to her, to which she was too weak to respond; and only left her at night on the assurance of the physician that he saw no immediate danger, promising to return early the next morning. The next morning when he returned she was no more.

Her death affected him greatly, much more than he could have imagined. He was invited

by her executors to attend her funeral and be present at the reading of her will. There were present, beside himself, the executors, Mr. Morgan, and Mr. Macintyre and his daughter. Mr. Macintyre was an old man; he probably, however, looked older than he really was, from his snow-white hair and a degree of paralytic weakness, which had given a bending feebleness to his whole person. He entered the room, leaning on the arm of his daughter, a young lady of perhaps three and twenty, whose countenance was less remarkable for beauty than a pensive, earnest expression, which told that sorrow had made early demands upon a mind naturally reflective.

Miss Macintyre moved slightly but courteously to the assembled company, and then occupied herself by seating her father in the large cushioned chair which had been provided for him. After he was seated, the old gentleman looked round with the air of one who felt himself the principal person there. He had already acted as chief mourner; and having now arranged his whole person to his mind, he remarked that nothing, he believed, prevented their proceeding to business.

There seemed some little hesitation and uncertainty among the executors, every one of whom saw a some one else there in that character whom they did not expect. At length, however, at a nod from Mr. Morgan, which Mr. Macintyre internally called impertinent, the seals were broken and the reading of the will commenced. Frank glanced round the assembly; every countenance appeared calm excepting Morgan's, which was deeply flushed, and the quick, restless movement of whose eye betokened something extraordinary. He divined how it was. The will bore date but a few months previously. Three thousand pounds was left to Mr. Macintyre; considerable sums to various charities; her large edition of the works of Thomas Paine, and her Boyle's Dictionary, bound in calf, to Frank Lawford, Esquire, and the whole remainder of her property, real and personal, to Joseph Morgan, Esquire, subject only to the payment of a few stipulated annuities.

The will was listened to with apparent patience in the hope of some codicil or other. But no; codicil there was none. Joseph Morgan was residuary legatee, and Frank Lawford had a few books.

"This is not the will!" exclaimed Mr. Macintyre.

"This was not the will of five years ago, in which I was an executor!" exclaimed one or two, whose names as executors were now omitted.

"This is her last will and testament!" said Mr. Morgan, with an ill-suppressed exultation.

Frank Lawford felt now, for the first time, that really, after all, the old lady's will had been a matter of importance to him. He was excited and displeased; he felt that he had been deceived, if not ill-used.

"Let us go!" said Catherine Macintyre to her father, on whom she feared the effects of this unlooked-for testamentary document.

"Three thousand pounds only!" said he, without noticing his daughter; "and what do you suppose the residuary legatee's share may be—this Morgan, whom nobody knows anything about—what will he get?" asked the old gentleman from one of the executors under the former will, and who, not being named in the new one, had thus lost the two hundred pounds which were left to each executor for his trouble, and thus felt himself also an aggrieved party.

"Not much under twenty thousand pounds," replied he, "when all the annuities are reckoned out."

Poor Macintyre swore that he would have the will set aside; called Morgan a knave and an artful interloper, and a scene of angry contention began.

"Let us go, dearest father," again besought Catherine, casting at the same moment a glance towards Frank Lawford, as if asking for his assistance.

"Who are you?" asked Mr. Macintyre, al-

most fiercely, as Frank came forward and politely offered to assist the old gentleman out.

"This is Mr. Frank Lawford," said one of the disappointed executors. "Till within these six months he stood very well in Mrs. Vaughan's will; and now the very mention of him is like an insult."

"Do me the favor, Mr. Frank Lawford," said Mr. Macintyre, "to see my daughter to the coach, which is at the door. I must know more about this iniquitous will; but this is no place for her."

Catherine prayed him to return with her; but he was already in fierce contention with Morgan.

"I will remain with your father," said Frank, handing her into the coach. "I will not leave him; and with your permission I will accompany him home."

From this day the fates of Catherine and Lawford were bound together.

As Catherine had feared, Mrs. Vaughan's unsatisfactory will greatly affected her father. From that time he never was well; and before he came into possession of the bequest which she had made him, he was beyond the power of enjoying it, had it been ten times the amount. He was gone where the want of money can never give pain, nor the possession of it pleasure.

In process of time news went to the Lawfords of Lawford, that Frank was married to a poor Scots girl, without even family or wealthy connections to recommend her. But by this time Frank's actions had ceased to surprise his family; "and yet," said Mrs. Colville, "this last act has put the finishing stroke to his former extraordinary conduct. Had Frank," argued she, "distinguished himself by marriage, other things, in course of time, might have been passed over; but a false step in marriage leaves nothing to be repaired!"

The father revised his will, leaving merely a small annuity to Frank, much less than to poor Adolphus, who had now sunk into a state of imbecility; and then, in the full belief that all his earthly duties had been thoroughly performed, at the age of eighty-six, went down to the grave of his fathers. Frank was out of England at the time of his father's death, and thus had no opportunity of craving his father's blessing, even if the old man would have given it. He, however, had so long been used to disappointment and trial, that let it come how and when it would he was found, like the true soldier on watch, ready to meet the enemy. A happy man, nevertheless, whether fortune smiled or frowned, was Frank Lawford; for his sound mind, and his sound heart, and the love that surrounded him, as with an atmosphere of heaven, made his life a perpetual rejoicing. His literary career had also been a bright one. He had taken a high and sure place among the noblest minds of his country. Those great truths, of which at first he had been, as it were, the solitary apostle, advanced, and, advocated by his eloquent pen, had now rooted themselves into the great national mart, as a part of its own vitality. For all this, his had been an arduous and anxious life; and at fifty-seven all the provision that he had been able to make for his family was the sum of two thousand pounds for which his own life was insured. In a worldly point of view, rich stock-brokers, and bankers, and holders of railway shares, would have said, that he had provided wretchedly for his family. Sad thoughts of the same kind often clouded his own mind; but then, in those dark moments, neither he nor those fat money-bags took into account, that Frank Lawford would leave to his children what money alone would never purchase—fine education, the noblest principles, and his own unblemished name.

## CHAPTER VI.

BUT let us now take a peep into that happy home at Kensington, which for so many years he had called his own.

It was Christmas day. Thousands of homes were prepared in London for that day's festivity. The rich feasted the rich, the great feasted the



great, and the noble the noble. There was a dinner party also that day at Frank Lawford's, and the whole house had a look of festivity.

Agnes and her young brothers had decorated the walls with evergreens; sprigs of holly, with their clustering berries, peeped out from above the heavy frame of their father's portrait, that beautiful portrait painted by a celebrated painter; a wreath of bay encircled the noble brow of his marble bust, which Chantrey, out of love to the author, had presented to his wife, and which stood among his books, those household gods of his, in his library. But it was in the dining-room that there was most show of festivity; a garland of evergreen wreathed the chandelier, and at four o'clock the window-curtains were drawn, and the lamps lighted, and the side-board shone out, with its glass and plate, and verdant evergreens. The table was spread for twelve; five individuals composed the family; the father and mother, Agnes the only daughter, and the two boys, Arthur a tall manly fellow, who looked fit to combat with the whole world, and little Harry as he was called, more as a term of endearment, than because of his size. Harry was turned eleven, slender in form, and timid in temper, gentle as a girl, and with a soft and delicate complexion, and beautiful wavy hair of a golden brown, which gave an expression of tender beauty to his whole person. He might have been justly painted as a St. John in childhood, and his character corresponded with that of the beloved apostle.

These were the family; the expected guests were seven. An excellent smell of capitally cooked viands came up from the kitchen; the wine was decanted; Mr. Frank Lawford had done it with his own hands, and very good wine it was; excellent port and sherry—none other; and such as he would have given to the best lord in the land. The family awaited their guests in the dining-room, and punctually as the clock struck four the dinner was served, and at that moment the *back gate* bell rang, not the *front* bell, and little Harry exclaimed joyfully that they were come! In they came, the welcome guests! and were received at the dining-room door as they came in, and then conducted to their seats.

"Ay, bless you, madam, how good it is of you to do so much for a poor body like me," said the clean, white-haired old man, with the spare form, and the friendly eye, whom Mrs. Lawford placed at her right hand.

"God bless you, sir; and a merry Christmas and a happy new year," said the half blind elderly needlewoman, whom Mr. Lawford placed in the similar seat by him.

"Take the seat near the fire, Mrs. Collins," said Mrs. Lawford, to an emaciated and half-famished-looking young woman, in poor but decent mourning, with an anxious countenance, who led by the hand a pale but intelligent-looking boy, "you will find that seat warm, and Johnny will sit beside you."

With a blush that flushed her melancholy face, and a tear in her eye, she took the offered seat, appreciating the thoughtful kindness of giving her and the boy those seats, for they two were the worst clad in the whole company, and were thus chilled to the bone.

"Here is a seat for you," said Agnes, leading up an old man, a sort of Trotty Veck, in his Sunday clothes, and with a little cheerful face, all smiles and courtesy, like a sunshiny winter's day—"here's a seat for you on my side of the table," said she, placing him opposite the dejected young widow.

Five guests were seated when the last two entered, and were cordially welcomed by all present. The dress and appearance of these last comers indicated much more comfort in home and circumstances than was apparent in that of the others. The one was a man about fifty, of rather a severe countenance, but with, as phrenologists would say, striking intellectual developments. His strong iron-gray hair was cut in a precise fashion, and turned back from his forehead; his deep-set gray eye, which seemed to penetrate with a stoical coldness whatever met his glance, looked out from under a pair of thick shaggy eyebrows; there was,

however, an expression of earnestness and heart about the lower part of the face, which somewhat neutralized the stern severity of its upper features. The whole head and face indicated a character in which two opposite natures prevailed, and left the beholder in doubt as to which would be the dominant one. His dress was that of a well-to-do artisan. A well-worn yet not by any means thread-bare suit, showed that he was one that required its duty from everything that belonged to him. He looked like a man who had money for a new suit when it was needed, but who would not buy one until then. With him there entered the room—not leaning on his arm, although she looked as if she knew that to be the mode in genteel society—a young girl of perhaps twenty, his daughter, and the apple of his eye, whose trim and elegant figure gave to her otherwise plain attire a rather modish and—if one may be allowed the word with reference to a poor girl—a *distingue* air. Her countenance was soft and remarkably pleasing; her fine black hair was smooth and glossy as silk; and the distinct pencilling of her exquisite eyebrows, which in color exactly resembled her hair, accorded beautifully with a rich and peach-like complexion. The eyes, of a deep violet color, had a laughing and rather coquettish expression, to which a little rosy mouth, with its curved and pouting lips, was made to match. At the back of her head, as if with the design of concealing as little of her fine hair as possible, was set a jaunty little cap, modestly but tastily trimmed with pink ribbons. Her dress was black French merino, made tight to the bust, and up to the throat, where it was relieved by a very small, white, fine linen collar. She looked, but for a certain bashfulness, or rather the air of one not quite at her ease, like a young gentlewoman in her morning dress. These two were William Jeffkins and his daughter Fanny. Fanny had now been in service in the country for six months, and this was her first visit to her father.

Jeffkins and his daughter were evidently, in a worldly point of view at least, the most respectable of all the guests, and accordingly were received by them all with bows and politeness. Every one would have given up their seats to them, more especially the merry old man who sat by Agnes and the half-blind old needlewoman. But the Jeffkins' places had been appointed beforehand, and so the dinner commenced.

Such was a specimen of a Christmas dinner-party at Frank Lawford's; and never could there be more joyous or more delighted guests, or more gratified hosts. It would have been a very convincing argument against any despiser or contemner of the poor, to have witnessed the politeness of these poor people, one towards another. The old man, to whom a good dinner made an era in his life, and who at eighty could count up every good dinner he had ever eaten, begged that "this lady" or "that gentleman" might be served before him—he was in no hurry; and the merry old man, with his white hair and his stiff joints, apologized to his neighbor right and left for beginning to eat before the whole company was served. It would have done anybody's heart good to have seen that humble company, in their poor but decent apparel, sitting at that good man's table as equals with him and his family, for that one day at least.

It was Frank Lawford's opinion that if we would really raise and improve the moral condition of the poor, nay, even the apparently depraved, those in the classes above them, those better instructed than they, must treat them as brethren and sisters. Only let the poor feel that we consider them as children of the same great Father in Heaven, not in word, but in deed, and we shall gain undoubted influence over them. People argued with him that this was true only as regarded particular individuals; but that the lower classes, generally, were too depraved and rude for any friendly or intimate intercourse to exist between them and the refined and pure: that law, and the terrors of law alone, must keep the poor in order. His own experience proved that this was not so true as

is generally believed; he knew that the kindness and the friendly countenance of a respectable man may reform even those whom law and its penalties would drag down to perdition. These his poor guests, his humble friends, some of them of many years standing, had been raised, by his Christian love and goodness, from misery and depravity, either in themselves or those with whom they were connected. They remembered him in their prayers; he was their friend and counselor in all their troubles—and the poor have many. He had assisted them, not so much by money as by instilling hope into hopeless breasts; by creating a motive for amended lives; by inducing them to save something, if it were but a shilling—for a man is twice a man when he can call something his own, if it be no more than a three-legged stool. Other friends of this class he had also besides these seven guests, in the same class of society, but they were not here; some, through his means, had emigrated to America, and cheered his heart with pleasant news of their growing prosperity; some were in Africa; and one, let not the rigidly righteous exclaim in horror, among the convicts of South Australia. Yes, and for that man, his heart had bled as for a brother. The man was of a weak yielding nature, and had been beguiled into crime; and the remembrance of Frank Lawford's pity and forgiveness, would work a surer reform in him than his seven years' exile. Such were the every-day acts of this good man's Christian benevolence; they were seen and blessed by the angels of God, rather than trumpeted among men.

Of all his humble friends, Frank Lawford was most attached to Jeffkins: their acquaintance commenced fifteen years before, and not under the most promising circumstances. Mr. Lawford was passing, one summer Saturday afternoon, down a wretched street in the neighborhood of Spitalfields, where he saw a crowd gathered round a drunken woman, whose clothes were almost torn from her back, and whose face was bleeding from a deep gash, which had been caused by her falling on some iron railing. She was still young; and a little girl of about five or six years old, forlorn and ragged as her mother, stood crying beside her. It was a melancholy spectacle. The crowd around was filled with a mingled sentiment of pity and disgust, Mr. Lawford inquired who she was; and at length ascertained that her home was in the neighborhood. The police came in and assisted her away; and Mr. Lawford followed, impelled by the deepest pity. Nothing could be more miserable than the home to which she was taken; her husband, who appeared like herself intoxicated, though not to the same extent, received her with the most bitter curses.

From this unpromising beginning the most fortunate results for the husband and child followed. Lawford soon discovered him to be one of those whom an unhappy marriage had dragged down into the cruellest misery. The wife soon died, but not without a little gleam of better feeling brightening, like the ray of a winter's sunset, the heart of herself and her husband. The wintry day was over; and the morning dawned which ushered in, as it were, a more vernal season, of which it might truly be said, that Mr. Lawford was the sun. A sunbeam of hope had burst into his formerly joyless heart and home; life seemed worth enjoying, but that quite in another way than he had hitherto called pleasure. He was a man of a naturally good understanding; he became a reader, and a thinker also; and being permitted to consider Mr. Lawford, not only his adviser but his friend, he felt himself raised in the social scale; he had become emphatically a man. From that time he was sober, industrious; and, being a clever workman, was able to save money. One master fault, however, he had, which Mr. Lawford in vain combated; this was that natural severity of character of which we before spoke, and which, whilst it made him severe in his judgment on himself, left him wanting in charity and forbearance towards others. In particular was he severe in his judgment of woman; the errors of his wife stood blackly before him, and only forgiven to her through her death. The



beauty of his daughter, and her natural gayety of character, excited in him nothing but fear and foreboding. He believed that he had done well in sending her into service into the country; and, when she was away from him, he thought of her with nothing but pride and affection. Poor Jeffkins! and she was now come back to him for a few days of Christmas holidays; and again he trembled, and was uneasy for her. "She's the lamb of my bosom—she's the joy of my life; and if evil happen to her, it will be the death of me," said he, in his heart, many a time, as he saw her light figure crossing the house-floor, or heard her singing over some little fireside ditty.

Such were Jeffkins and his daughter. But the dinner is now over; and the poor guests blessed God, and their good hosts, for a dinner which had "strengthened, as it were, the very marrow of their bones;" pity only, thought good Mrs. Lawford with a sigh, that we can afford you such a dinner but once a year. And now, while they are left to a little comfortable gossip among themselves, over the dining-room fire, and Mr. and Mrs. Lawford are together in the library, before tea again assembled them, we will hear what information Agnes has gained from her humble friend, Fanny Jeffkins, of her new life in service.

"Yes, Miss Agnes," said she, in the tone of one not intending to take advice, "it is all very true what you may say about stopping in one place, and living with such a quiet, respectable family as the dean's; but I have made up my mind to leave, and then, as I said before, old Mrs. Colville, the late archdeacon's lady, your own aunt, Miss Agnes, who now lives at Lawford with your uncle, let me know through her woman that she would get me a place; she took a deal of notice of me when she was staying at the deanery."

"I have heard a deal about my Aunt Colville from papa," said Agnes.

"Yes, miss, I dare say," continued Fanny, "she is a very nice lady; and her woman Mrs. Sykes told me, that if ever I left my present place, I might have a situation as upper nurse maid at her lady's niece's at Lawford Rectory, and that is among your own relations, Miss Agnes, and is just what I should like. I should live with the rector's lady, and have better wages than at the deanery."

"The rector's lady?" questioned Agnes; "how can that be?"

"Oh, yes, Miss Agnes," continued Fanny, who seemed perfectly informed on the subject, "Miss Lawford, the squire's oldest daughter, old Mrs. Colville's niece, married the present rector—that son of the late rector, and brother, only a great many years younger, to Archdeacon Colville."

"Yes, yes," said Agnes, "you are right; I recollect we heard of the marriage; she is niece, and, at the same time, sister-in-law to my Aunt Colville. But Fanny," continued she, "I must candidly tell you, that I think my aunt did not act right in inducing you to leave your present situation."

"She did not induce me," said Fanny, crimsoning very deeply, "but it is very dull at the deanery; the servants are all old, and there's very little company kept—only just once or twice a-year a great party; and I had made up my mind to leave; and so I told Mrs. Sykes, Mrs. Colville's maid, and what she did is no more than one friend might do for another."

"But my Aunt Colville is a very severe and exact woman," said Agnes, "you would be in strict order if you lived with her."

"But," said Fanny, "I am to live with Mrs. Sam Colville at the rectory. I saw her at the dean's party, and Miss Ada, her unmarried sister, the most beautiful young lady in the world!"

"Is, then, my Cousin Ada so beautiful?" asked Agnes with cordial interest, and eager to hear something of those relations of whom she knew nothing.

"She is the handsomest young lady I ever saw," returned Fanny, with enthusiasm; "I helped her to dress, because she did not bring her maid, and she stayed all night. She was

dressed in pale pink brocaded silk, and wore a tiara of pearls. Everybody said how beautiful she was; and there was her brother, Mr. Edward, too, in his uniform; he was just then going out to the East Indies, and"—Fanny paused, a peculiar expression passed over her face, and then she continued: "They are a very nice family, Miss Agnes, and I am sure that at Mrs. Sam Colville's I shall find myself very happy."

"If you must leave the deanery," suggested Agnes.

"I have made up my mind to leave," said Fanny decidedly, "and so I let Mrs. Sam know; and to tell you the real truth, Miss Agnes, I am not going back to the deanery but to Lawford at once, and that next week."

"I see, you had made up your mind long ago," said Agnes, smiling.

"Why, Miss Agnes, you see," returned Fanny, anxious to win her auditor to her plans, "it will seem like living at home, to live among your relations; and Mrs. Sam is an excellent lady, and I know that I shall be very comfortable at the rectory. I shall have better wages than at the deanery, and my meals with the children; and I am told that they are such sweet children, and I always was so fond of children, and there is a maid to wait on the nursery. It's quite an upper sort of place, Miss Agnes; and then old Mrs. Colville seems such a very clever, nice lady"—Fanny paused, and again Agnes smiled, remembering the picture her father had so often drawn of his sister Camilla.

Poor Fanny Jeffkins! She deceived Agnes, she deceived her father; perhaps, also, she deceived herself as to the true motives for leaving the quiet old deanery to go and live at Lawford, to take care of Mrs. Sam's children. And why, in speaking of her new situation, and describing the various members who composed the family at the rectory and the hall, did she not mention, either to her father or to Agnes, Tom Lawford, the squire's eldest son, the brother of the beautiful Ada, and of that Mrs. Sam Colville, for whose children she seemed to have conceived so much affection? Poor Fanny! She thought of her own beauty, she thought how she had been kindly noticed, and in part educated by Mr. Frank Lawford and his family. Poor girl! Vanity, and ambition, and the weakness of a tender and trusting heart, had made her listen to false and cruel flatteries, and to foster fond and false hopes. If he were to marry me, thought she a thousand times, his family might forgive him. Old Mrs. Colville took a fancy to me directly. Mr. Frank Lawford and his family have always been my friends. Such things have been before now; and, oh Heavens! if I should ever be Tom Lawford's wife!

The Christmas-day was at an end. The humble guests returned to their own homes, blessing God that there were those who were not ashamed of the poor. The dejected hearts of poor Mrs. Collins and her little son imbibed from that evening a ray of consolation that gladdened and comforted their after lives. Jeffkins and his daughter went home also; but Fanny kept from her father, even more guardedly than she had done from Agnes, any knowledge of the true state of her feelings.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE next Christmas-day's dinner at Frank Lawford's was not as cheerful as the last. Neither Jeffkins nor his daughter were there, and the cause of their absence saddened the whole party. Yet their names were not mentioned until the guests after dinner were left, as was customary, to have a little gossip among themselves before tea.

"Aye, Lord help us, what a thing this is about Jeffkins and his daughter," said the white-haired old man, with the friendly smile; "what did you hear, Mrs. Bennet?"

Mrs. Bennet, the half-blind old needlewoman, said that she had heard nothing but what Mr. Collins had told her.

All looked to Mrs. Collins, who immediately

drawing her chair more closely into the circle, began for general edification.

"Why, you see," said she, "as Mr. Jeffkins has taken Johnny 'prentice, I go there now and then; and he, poor man, felt it now and then a sort of relief to open his heart to me; and yet he is naturally a very close man, and most of what I do know I know only through putting one thing to another. Poor Jeffkins! he thought that Fanny was out of all danger, living at a clergyman's, and in the country; and oh! he was so fond of her, and so proud of her, though he is a man that does not show his feelings. Well, all at once the news came that Fanny had left her service, and nobody could tell where she was. He set off in a hurry to Lawford Rectory, but got no satisfaction. She had given a regular month's warning, at the end of a quarter, when her wages were paid, and they were sorry to part with her; but go she would, and she did not even wait for the end of her month. I never saw a poor man so cut up in my life as was Jeffkins; for he is a proud man, and he knew that this setting off in that way could lead to no good. He advertised her, but he got no answer; and all this time he was as still about it, and said nothing to anybody. But my Johnny, whose bed stood in a sort of closet within his chamber, said what nights he used to pass; how he lay tossing and groaning for hours, and then would get up and pray till the very sweat dropped from off him; and sometimes he'd curse just as violently, and threaten what he would do—for he's a stern, savage-tempered man when he's angry, is Jeffkins. He got no answer, however, to his advertisements, and Mr. Frank Lawford, I believe, wrote to his relations at Lawford, but nothing came out. At last, one day a letter came without a name to say, that if he would forgive her, she would come back. He promised he would; and come back she did one evening at dusk hour. I knew nothing of this at the time, or it should have turned out differently to what it did; for I would have taken her home to me and have befriended her. What Jeffkins really expected I know not—he had no right to have expected anything but what he found. But when he saw her condition he would not forgive her; and God knows what might have happened if it had not been for our Johnny. And hard-hearted, unnatural father that he was, he turned her out of doors again, and bade her go to the workhouse, and give birth to her child there. It's my opinion, however, that he never really meant so bad by her. But she took him at his word, and went, not to any workhouse—God knows where she went—and that's two months since. Jeffkins soon repented of what he had done, and now he would give his life to gain tidings of her or the child. He's a complete wreck; neither eats nor sleeps, but goes moping about like a melancholy man. He's punished for his hard-heartedness, and God knows what has become of her!"

"God help her!" sighed the half-blind needlewoman.

"God help us all, poor weak creatures," said the white-haired old man, with tears running down his cheeks.

"Her body will be turning up some of these days," said Mrs. Collins; "for it's my opinion that she has made away with herself."

"God help her!" again sighed the needlewoman.

On his fifty-seventh birthday Frank Lawford gave the finishing stroke to a work which had occupied him for two or three years. It was a work into which he had put his whole soul, and which he believed would be his best gift to posterity.

"Now, Agnes, my child," said he to his daughter, after dinner, "I must read you the last chapter of my book." He said this with a remarkably affectionate tenderness of voice, and, as his daughter looked into his face, she saw that his eyes were filled with tears. She remembered that this was his birthday, his fifty-seventh, and that his mother, whom he had loved so dearly, died at that same age. Agnes was



the idol of her father, and his dearest companion; and, young as she was, at least comparatively speaking, he was satisfied with nothing until it had received her approval.

Without noticing her father's emotion—how often she thought of it afterwards!—she linked her arm into his, and accompanied him into the library, that beloved room which seemed a part of her father, and where she, too, the privileged companion of even his hours of study sat and wrote, too, without interrupting him; nay, the father said that it did him good to cast up his eyes from his book and see her form near him. They sat down at his table, he with his lamp before him and his manuscript, and she on a low seat opposite to him, and just at his knees.

"I must read you the whole of my last chapter," said he, laying his hand on her beautiful head.

It was a long chapter, and on a serious subject: it contained a summary of his views on man's duty to man—a subject admirably suited to his pen. It was written from his heart, and was the concentration of the whole spirit of his works, and of his life. Agnes' heart glowed as he went on; she responded to every noble sentiment, and their eyes often met, with an expression of unspeakable affection and union of soul. It was the young disciple sitting at the feet of the master, and hearing for the last time the words of love and wisdom from his lips—oh, what lessons were they to be henceforward!

"When man has faithfully fulfilled his duty to his fellow man, then, and not till then, has he a right to call God his Father!"

These were the concluding words of his argument; and his daughter, with tears of deep emotion in her eyes, gazed lovingly into his face. At that moment a change came over his countenance, and leaning back his head in the large chair in which he sat, he laid his hand upon his heart, whilst a short convulsion shook his frame. Agnes started up. Her scream brought in her mother—Let us be spared the scene which followed: we cannot describe it if we would—the husband, the father—the noble author, at the moment of his work's completion, was dead! He of all men was entitled to call God his Father; and to his Father he was departed!

A night of sorrow, almost of despair, settled down on that lately so happy household. Poor Jeffkins came that night to the house to crave a word of consolation from this strong-minded friend. The servants told him that Mr. Lawford was dead. Without a word he turned away from the house; and somebody saw him after midnight, sitting on the stone-step at the gate, weeping like a child.

The newspapers, of all creeds and parties, announced within a few days, and with honorable mention of his moral and intellectual worth, the death of Mr. Frank Lawford.

"Poor Frank is dead!" exclaimed his brother George, now the fat and for many years gout-afflicted squire, to his family at luncheon. "Poor Frank!" and the tear twinkled in his eye as he laid down the paper.

"Poor Frank," said his sister Colville who sat at the head of the table, "I wonder how he has left his family!"

At that moment letters came in, and among them one from poor Agnes herself to her uncle to whom she had never before written, announcing the sudden death of her father. Her mother, she said, was ill, but nothing could exceed the kindness of her friends; even the very poor, whom her father had befriended, wished, if possible, to do something to assuage their grief. A few words she said on the very best of fathers, on the noblest of human beings—but as she wrote, her tears blinded her eyes, and blotted the paper. The squire wept as the letter was read. "We ought to have done something for poor Frank," said he. "I have often, and of late in particular, been sorry for the coolness between us; we should have remembered that he was our brother." The squire wept bitterly—he had hardly wept more when his wife died.

"We will do something," said Aunt Colville,

soothingly. "This poor Agnes, now—what a nice, well-written letter she has sent," said she, also wiping her eyes; "we must see what we can do for her."

The old gentleman wrote a very kind letter back, offered his house to any of them, requested to know of their circumstances, and regretted that his own indisposition prevented his being able to attend the funeral. His son, however, would go as his representative. In a postscript he added, that if his brother had left them in any pecuniary embarrassment, he begged that he might be applied to; and furthermore, he desired to know what family his brother had left, and what prospects they had in the world.

Mr. Tom Lawford attended his uncle's funeral, and carried back the news that men of rank and distinction attended it likewise. Of about a dozen poor mourners who followed the procession, he said nothing, for he knew not of them; they, however, next to his own family, most bitterly bewailed his loss.

"Make way, will you?" said one of the sexton's assistants to a poor man who stood by the grave after the company had moved away, "let's get this earth shovelled in." The person addressed was standing with his arms folded, his hat pulled over his eyes, and was looking into the grave where the coffin lay barely covered with a few shovel-fuls of soil. "By your leave?" said the man, again putting forth his spade. The person addressed heaved a deep groan, and then moved slowly away. "God help him!" said the man, looking after him, and touched by his manner; "I do believe that there lies somebody in this coffin that he loved."

Tom Lawford returned home, and told of the esteem in which his uncle lived; of his really respectable home; of his valuable library; of his fine picture and bust; of Agnes, the only daughter, whose grief for her father seemed so excessive; of her mother, who certainly was a gentlewoman; and of the two fine and interesting boys. Of their circumstances generally, he could say nothing; they were much obliged by the kind offers of his father, but whether they were not too proud to accept of them it was difficult to say.

The head of the family gone, and only two thousand pounds left—what was to be done for the family? Agnes and her mother, with heavy, but yet with trustful hearts, consulted together. In a few days, a letter from the Rev. Mr. Macintyre, Mrs. Lawford's brother in Scotland, arrived to determine their plans. He advised that what little income there was should be devoted principally to the education of the boys at the school where it was their father's wish that they should be placed. He advised that Agnes should, for the present, accept of the invitation from her father's family—to visit them, or to make herself useful among them, as it might turn out; and that, for the present, at least, his sister should come to him. The letter breathed the warmest affection. Mr. Macintyre had been the dear friend of her husband; she fancied now that, could he have spoken, he would have advised the same.

And now the time came when the happy family of the Lawfords was to be broken up for ever. The books, the portrait, and the bust were gone—nothing now remained in the house but that which was to be dispersed among strangers by public auction. Mrs. Lawford was gone with the boys back to school. Agnes had suffered much in parting with them. On the morrow she was to part with her mother, this was her last evening in the home of so much happiness—of so much sorrow. She was seated in the chair in which her father had died, sunk in deep thought, and with her eyes swimming with tears, when the door opened, and the figure of a woman in a large cloak, and with her bonnet drawn over her face, entered. Agnes started.

The woman advanced a step or two, and then stood with down-cast eyes, like a criminal before his judge.

"Fanny Jeffkins!" exclaimed Agnes, with a tone in which surprise and pity were mingled.

"I am ashamed, Miss Lawford, to come here. I am ashamed to look you in the face after what has happened; but I heard by chance that you were leaving London for ever, and I felt as if I must see you again."

"Have you seen your father?" inquired Agnes.

The girl burst into tears, and supported herself against the table.

"Sit down, Fanny," said Agnes, drawing a chair towards the fire, and near her own. "I am glad that you are come—what, now, can I do for you?"

"I cannot sit in your presence," said the girl, after the violence of her emotion was over. "I am very unhappy," she said. "I am a poor, fallen creature, I know; and it has cost me a great deal to make up my mind to come—I did not know how you would receive me."

"I have always wished you well," said Agnes, who had risen, that at least they might thus seem equal; but, oh, Fanny, you must answer me one question—why do you not return to your father?"

Again the girl burst into tears, and remained silent.

"Am I to understand," continued Agnes, "that you do not intend returning to him. If so, why, then, are you here? Am I to ask forgiveness for you? If it be that, how gladly will I do it." She made no answer and Agnes continued. "I do not know how far your life of crime and wretchedness may have hardened your heart, but I cannot believe that you have fallen past recall. Oh, then, Fanny, I beseech of you, by all that is sacred and dear to you, to return to your father; let me intercede between you! I know what he has suffered on your account—we even in the midst of our sorrow, have had tears to spare for him, and he has wept with us: he is a good man, although he may be stern. But only think, Fanny, what you were to him—his all in life—and so as you deceived him!"

The poor girl groaned, clasped her hands, but made no answer.

"Do not close your heart against him," continued Agnes, "when, like the father of the poor prodigal in the gospel, he holds out his arms to embrace you; for if you do, you will have no right to blame anyone but yourself for your future fate, however dark or unhappy it may be; nor otherwise, if your life be such as some say, have you a right to intrude yourself into this house."

The girl sighed deeply, still without replying, and cast a quick and searching glance at Agnes.

"If I seem to speak severely," continued Agnes, "it is from my earnest desire for your welfare and happiness. You are come here for some purpose—what is it? I am sure it must be good. Speak, then, freely. For my father's sake I am sure that your's will listen to me. If you wish me to be your intercessor. Tell me, then, what I can do for you. We will not cast you off, although you may have sinned; we are all sinners one way or another before God—He knows what our temptations have been, and what strength we have had to resist them. God often is more merciful than man, but then, having once sinned, we must sin no more, and having to suffer in consequence of sin, we must bear it patiently. Tell me, then, for what purpose you are come, and what you require from me."

Again poor Fanny sighed deeply, and then, as if awakening from a deep trance, fixed her eye on Agnes' face; "I knew how good you were, Miss Agnes," said she, in a tremulous voice, "and I know also—sorrowfully and surely did I know it—how unworthy I am to speak with you. You cannot despise me more than I despise myself; my father cannot love me more than I love him! He thinks I have forgotten him—oh, no. I would lay down my life for him. How have I wished that I could see him in danger of his life, that I might rush in, and, at the sacrifice of my own, save his—that I could hear of his having the plague which would drive everyone from him, so that I might go and nurse him night and day, and die in thus showing my



love! Does this look as if I had no love for him?" asked she.

"Fanny," said Agnes, "you wish to show your affection and devotion to him in some wild, improbable way, and such occasions never will occur—but in the simple, easy, commonplace way of going to him, and proving to him your repentance, you will not show it. This is no true affection! What days and nights of unspeakable anguish, worse than any suffering of body, you might spare him, and yet you will not! No, Fanny, deceive not yourself with the idea that yours is true affection—it is selfishness—it is pride—God forbid that it should be ever worse."

"It is an easy thing to judge," said Fanny, in a voice of deep anguish—"it is a bitter thing to suffer! and I have suffered!"

"Then your child also," continued Agnes, "where is it? These are the thoughts which wring your poor father's heart—what is become of your child?—Ah, you have done very wrong, Fanny, you have sadly deceived us all!"

"Miss Agnes," said Fanny, "you and your family have been very good to me, and how much I have loved you, I have no right to say, seeing how fallen and sinful I have been, and how miserable I am! But however," continued she, as if impatient to proceed, "I came here, as you say, for a purpose, and that I must accomplish or die. I have heard that you are going to live altogether at Lawford—that was a fatal place to me! and there are those yet at Lawford whom I would die to save. You will see him, Miss Agnes," continued she in a hurried, agitated voice; "he will love you—he cannot help it—and you will love him, there is no helping it, and oh, when you are his wife," said she clasping her hands, "see that right is done to my poor child. It is there! I was not the unnatural mother my poor father imagined me—how could I? I loved the child too well to have done it any wrong—it was dear to me as an angel of heaven, for its father's sake, unkind as he was to me! At first the thought was bitter to me, of you being his wife—but I am now satisfied: I know how good you are, and for mercy's sake—perhaps even for mine, you will befriend my poor child. Promise me that you will do this!" cried she, coming forward almost wildly.

"You startle me," said Agnes; "and I do not understand you—at least can only dimly conjecture your strange meaning."

Fanny looked at her with a hurried but searching glance, and then said, "you know who I mean; he came to your father's funeral, your cousin, Tom Lawford; you cannot help loving him, but then your love will be fortunate."

"Oh, Fanny," said Agnes, "far wiser would it have been to have confided your child to your own father's care, rather than to the man who had wronged you so cruelly. You have done wrong: you have made your child an outcast. How could you expect that the family would own your child? Your own father would!"

"My father turned me out of doors on a winter's night—turned me out in my misery, and my shame," said Fanny bitterly. "Oh, Miss Agnes, he is a hard, unforgiving, un pitying man; he had no mercy, and no compassion! What was I to do? without a home, in the streets of London, humbled and ashamed, and my child about to be born! Were I to tell you all I suffered, you would never forget it the longest day you lived. The world goes on smoothly, Miss Agnes, smoothly to the rich and the untempted, and it thinks not on the bleeding and trampled hearts, which misery and an unkind fortune has thrust out under foot! It is easy to talk of sinners; but God only knows what I have gone through; and yet, at times, misery and misfortune have made me almost doubt if there were a God!"

"Do not speak so, do not think so?" exclaimed Agnes, "you only aggravate your sin and your misery by such thoughts. God sees you, and even now, in the person of your sorrowing father, calls you back to him!"

"After my child was born," continued Fanny, "as soon as I was able to travel, I sold

some of my things to raise a little money, and set off to Lawford. My child was beautiful, I thought no one could have the heart to cast him off!"

"And yet you could," interrupted Agnes.

"That was not my intention," returned Fanny, "I told his father, in the bitterness of my desertion, that, if need were, I would send it to him; and for my part, I meant to work hard for it. I hoped to get a wet-nurse's place in London when I returned; but I took cold, was laid up with a dreadful fever, insensible for some weeks; and, when I recovered, it was to find that I had fallen amid worse than thieves. I was in bondage to the vilest and the most remorseless. I was with those who have no mercy and whom law could not reach. I was sold, body and soul. I had no hope, and no power to rescue myself. Against my will I was now a sinner. Remorse and despair took hold on me; I felt that now I was a loathsome sinner, and the punishment of sin was on me. I seemed to myself not worth saving—my pride was gone, and my self-respect; and all that I longed for was revenge on my oppressors, and death for myself. I saw my poor father's advertisements; but he had thrust me out when I was comparatively spotless—now I was not worth saving—it was too late! Nothing but death, and the pity and mercy of God could redeem me, and I only said let me die!"

Agnes wept.

"Oh, Miss Agnes," continued Fanny, in a broken voice, "it is a lamentable thing to think of a human being made thus hopelessly forlorn—made thus despicable, thus worthless, through the villainy of others. What is law for, if these things are to be! The queen is a woman like us, and yet there is no pity for us? Great and good ladies, clergymen's wives and daughters, are women like us, and yet on us they have no pity! We are down at the lowest turn of fortune's wheel; and yet, such as I, the betrayed and the unfortunate, are properly objects of pity, and not of anger and scorn."

"I pity you, Fanny!" said Agnes.

"Yes," continued she "you and other good people pity us, as they do thieves and murderers, because they think us willfully wicked, and therefore the most unfortunate of human beings; but I have not been willfully wicked. I loved one too high for me. I was beguiled and deceived; and the loss of my good name, and my father's favor, and the having ruined his peace, was my fitting punishment. My after intention was to be honest and blameless. I meant to work hard for my child and to sin no more. But a power, irresistible as death, took hold on me, under the guise of friendship; and, weak in body and mind, I was dragged down the abyss of infamy and sorrow. God help me! I only wonder that I committed no murder. But my course will not be a long one; the sooner I am gone the better," said she, bursting into tears.

Agnes wept also. "Ah, my poor Fanny," said she, "my heart aches for you; but you must be rescued. Let me send for your father—let me see you ask his forgiveness—let me see you reconciled."

"We shall, we shall be reconciled!" returned Fanny, impatiently. "I will go to my father myself. I know the parable of the prodigal son. I have often thought of it—of going too to my father. I have thought also of putting an end to my own life. I must be grown very wicked," said she, in a tone of the utmost anguish—"very wicked indeed you will think me! but oh, Miss Agnes, this is the last time we shall ever meet, the last time you will ever hear my voice. I shall never again see my child: hear then my prayer," said she, sinking on her knees; "when you are his wife, have pity on my child. Do not be ashamed of the child of an unfortunate mother! You are good: he will refuse you nothing; and so, may God Almighty always hear your prayer; and may no child of yours ever want a friend!"

"Rise, Fanny! rise," said Agnes, "you alarm and distress me!"

"Do not refuse me," pleaded the poor young woman, with eyes full of tears, "or I shall indeed doubt if there be a God in Heaven!"

"All that I can do I will do," said Agnes, tenderly—"but for your child!"

"Plead for it with its unkind father," said Fanny; "plead for it with him as you only can: and keep my secret from all the world!"

"Promise me, in return, then," said Agnes, "that you will go to your father!"

"I will! I will!" said Fanny, rising from her knees. "It will soon be all one to me, whether he is angry or not."

"This night you will go to him!" repeated Agnes.

"I will! I will!" returned Fanny, hastily, and rushed from the room.

Poor Fanny! It was a wild dark night; and, gathering her cloak about her, she ran through the streets, and onward through lane and alley, in the direction of her father's house, which was several miles off; through that vast ocean of life she went, of which she was but one drop of misery and woe. On she went, now feeling as if the pardoning arms of her father's love were enfolding and sustaining her; now, as if that fearful and heart-rending scene of repulsion and outcast, which had thrown her, a wreck, upon the sea of infamy and sorrow, was again to be acted. But a strong resolve drove her on. Now she thought of the woman whose victim she was: the cruel, the unsparing! now of the man whom she had been tempted to murder; and, like a haunting demon, these thoughts drove her onward. "I will go to my father, and will say, I have sinned before heaven and in thy sight; make me as one of thy hired servants!"

At that very time, poor Jeffkins sat in his solitary home, and thought upon his daughter and wept. His anger had not left him, and yet he wept tears of love and pity. "Better to have been childless," groaned he, "than to have been thus deserted! So as I loved her! so proud as I was of her—thus to have been deserted!"

He thought on the years of peace and prosperity which had been; on his little property; on his good name; on his powers of mind; on the little set of whom he had been the head; of the days when he had gone preaching into the country, and his little Fanny had gone with him: he thought of Mr. Lawford, his patron and his friend; of the yearly dinner, and the kind intercourse which that good man had allowed to exist between them. He looked at his little shelf of books, at his writing desk, at the little chair in which Fanny had sat as a child; and, all at once, a gush of tenderness overflowed his heart, and bending his face to his knees, he sat and wept like a child.

But poor Fanny came not. She neared her father's door, and then turned aside. She went far off. It was deep night; no one saw her, or heard her, excepting Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. A few days afterwards, and the body of a woman was floating along the icy waters of the river Lee. No one saw it; "a jutting bank arrested its course;" it floated into a little cove, among the withered sedges of the last year. They too had had their time of bloom and beauty, and so had she; they were bleached by the weather, and blown by the fierce winds of the unkind wintry season; so was she, by the tempests of misery and misfortune. How like a melancholy funeral pall the gray sedges bend over her! and the strong ice enclosed her in a cold embrace.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Her painful interview with Fanny Jeffkins, and the sad and strange history which that poor and unhappy girl had told her, hung like a dark cloud over the mind of Agnes Lawford, as the next morning she journeyed towards her new home. The pain of parting from her mother, and leaving her own home forever, was mingled with sympathy for her poor humble—friend, we were going to say, and



friend it shall be, for Agnes was never more her friend than at this moment. The belief that Fanny had really, like the repentant prodigal, gone to her father, was the one cheering ray that brightened the otherwise dark subject. That voice of agony pleading with her, "Be a friend to my child, and keep my secret from all the world!" rung in her ears and in her heart: she determined with herself to wait patiently, and see what circumstances might bring forward; she prayed earnestly, though wordlessly, for help from God, and ability to do that which was best, whatever the duty might be. In this spirit she journeyed on to Leicester, where her uncle's carriage met her, together with that very Mrs. Sykes, of whom poor Fanny Jeffkins had told her. Mrs. Sykes informed her, that her lady was gone out that morning, to make calls with Miss Ada, who was going from home in a day or two on a long visit, and therefore she was sent to meet her. It did not seem a very cordial welcoming of her among them, Agnes thought, and the thought depressed her.

And now, while with a dejected and anxious heart, poor Agnes is making the last ten miles of her journey, let us say a few words to the reader on the exact state of the family, which at this moment, we understand better than he does.

The father had been now for some years a gouty invalid, who rarely left the house. His sister Colville fancied that she saw in him traces of an impaired intellect; but in that she was mistaken. It is true, however, that the more active management of his affairs had now been, for some time, in the hands of his eldest son, that Tom Lawford, of whom we have heard something already: still that argued nothing against the sound state of his mind, however infirm his health might be. His sister Colville, who, since the death of her husband, the learned archdeacon, and of his wife, had resided with him, had taken upon herself the whole internal domestic management, as was sure to be the case wherever she came. Many infirmities, however, he had notwithstanding, which made him willing to yield up the reins of government to any one capable of managing them. Poor man, he required now also much and constant personal attention, and that of a kind which his valet could not give. As he had grown older, he had become much more fond, not of reading, but of listening to books; he extremely disliked being left alone; he wished always to have some with him, his daughter Ada, or Mrs. Colville; but they had no time to spare: and so he fretted and grew peevish, and was a trouble to himself and those about him. And thus his family, who had their own pleasures and their own occupations, were too busy to have any time for him, as well as willing enough to escape from his irritability, and frequent ill-humor.

Mr. Lawford now, as in his younger years he had always done, considered his sister Colville the cleverest of women. Right glad was he therefore, after the death of his wife, that she should take up her abode with him, and thus be the most desirable chaperon in the world for his, at that time, two unmarried daughters. All that "sister Camilla" had done in former years for "poor Adolphus," who was now dead and gone, and without the world knowing much of his deficiencies, remained in his mind as a debt which the whole family owed to her. She had been a mother to Adolphus; and now, it was with no little gratification that he heard her speak of herself as the mother of his children. As a mother, she had already been looking out in the world for suitable settlements and alliances for them.

The Lawfords, however, were not alone the objects of the diplomatic lady's ambition; the Colvilles were so likewise: for if she was a Lawford by birth, she had become a Colville by marriage; and though she had no children of her own, the large family of younger brothers and sisters of her husband had, ever since her marriage, been objects of her care. All had, one after another, been well settled and well disposed of long ago—all, excepting the young-

est of the family, Sam, who had been brought up to the church, and had now been his father's curate for some years. The Squire, too, had a son, his second son, Edward, who was destined to the church from his infancy, the appointed future rector of Lawford, when he should have taken orders, and death should have removed the present rector, now well advanced in years. Nobody but the really clever widow of Archdeacon Colville would have known how to manage all points so as to make every one a gainer in this family game at chess.

Nothing, however, was more easy to her than this. Her own brother-in-law, Sam, the present curate of Lawford, should marry her eldest niece, Mildred, and thus, receiving the living as a part of his wife's fortune, two persons were at once provided for. Mildred and Sam Colville had been brought up, as it were, together; the only wonder was that anybody should think of anything else but their marriage. Mrs. Colville had always prided herself on the success of all her schemes; therefore, nothing in this world seemed to her more natural than that her dear old father-in-law should quietly drop off just at the right moment for the young people to have a home ready to receive them. Mildred became Mrs. Sam Colville and a little marriage tour of two months sufficed to put the rectory-house in good order for them.

"What is to become of Edward?" asked his father, when Aunt Colville first proposed to him the marriage between Mildred and her brother-in-law; "don't let us have another 'poor Adolphus' in the family!"

But the warning was hardly needful. Aunt Colville had managed all that. Years before, while Edward was but a boy, she knew that his inclination turned rather to the army than the church; and when Edward, with the quick eyes of youth, saw a lover-like intimacy springing up between the Hall and the rectory, as it had done in the days of the last generation, he opened his heart fully and freely to his aunt, and besought her influence with his father that his destination in life might be changed.

The omnipotent Aunt Colville managed all according to his wishes, and the young soldier embarked with his captain's commission for the East Indies, feeling unbounded gratitude to his aunt, and evincing its continuance by sending to her Delhi scarfs and Indian toys. His career so far had been a brilliant one; and his aunt's favorite phrase was, that "he had engrafted the laurels of military glory upon the old family tree."

Edward, from his boyhood, had been much attached to his young sister Ada, to whom he now wrote of his splendid life in the East, and never ended without saying that should her course of true love not run smooth, or should she find no one to her mind, she must come out to him. It was a favorite joke of Ada's, that she would go to India to her brother; but it was only a joke: neither she nor her Aunt Colville had any ideas of anything but an English husband in an English home. Ada was the pride of her aunt's heart: and, from the first moment of her becoming the head of her brother's household, she resolved that Ada should marry well. She looked round among the county gentry for a suitable husband for her, and none seemed so desirable or so suitable as the one whom destiny, it was believed, had appointed for her. This was their neighbor, Mr. Latimer, of the Hays, a gentleman of large independent fortune, who, having now, for several years, been his own master, had established for himself one of the finest and most unexceptionable of characters. Mr. Latimer was one who, both for his worth and his wealth was universally courted. Any one would have been proud of his alliance; many had striven for it, but he seemed hard to please; he required much, very much in a wife; and, quite aware of his own desirableness to some half-dozen at least unmarried young ladies, still preserved his own unspoiled sincerity of character, and would neither be wooed, nor flattered, nor coquetted into com-

pliance. The world said that he required so much in a wife that he never would be suited, nay, he began almost to think so himself. Aunt Colville, however, was not going to be foiled. She had made up her mind that her niece should, in the end, accomplish that which no one else could. She began even to feel sure of success. People began to congratulate her on the conquest which her niece had made; and she began, even spite of her usual tact and prudence, to speak as if it were as good as settled, when, all at once, to the surprise of the world, and the unspeakable chagrin of Aunt Colville, Mr. Latimer announced his intention of spending two years on his West Indian property. It was very strange, she thought! Two years was so long a period of a lover's life. In two years Ada might be married and gone forever! Could it be possible, after all, that he had no serious thought of her—or was this a ruse on his part to bring the young beauty to terms. She had coquetted with others—she had shown considerable frivolity of character—her anxious aunt had often been displeased and annoyed at her waywardness and petulance in his presence. Had, then, the two years' absence anything to do with this? was it intended to bring her to her senses, or to wean him of a passion which, perhaps, he thought hopeless! Mrs. Colville tried the question in all ways; she redoubled her own attentions to him; talked seriously to Ada; besought her not to let such a lover escape; spoke of the scandal in the neighborhood, of the triumph of this and that lady; and remembered, with secret vexation, how, in the secure pride of her heart, she had been so unwise as to speak of the connection as certain. What if he had heard of this, and was now deserting the field to prove himself free, and leave the lady a free course with her other lovers? Never had Aunt Colville been in such a dilemma before. That no enemy, however, might triumph, she maintained, as much as possible, the old appearance of things,—spoke of "dear Mr. Latimer's departure" as a public calamity; begged him to spend all the time he could possibly spare with them, and took care that he should not lack the opportunity of declaring himself to Ada if such were his wish. It looked exceedingly well that Mr. Latimer spent his last evening at Lawford. Ada was perfectly charming, mild, and gentle, and the very ideal of what Latimer's wife ought to be; but for all that, what did he say at parting? that he had no expectations of finding her *Miss Lawford* on his return. And thus he left the house, and the next day left England, without declaring his passion, or endeavoring to secure her affections to himself in any way.

Mrs. Colville was exceedingly angry, but she said not a single word either of her anger or her chagrin to Ada; that she kept for her own breast and for Mrs. Sam Colville, who, since her marriage, had risen very high in her aunt's opinion. Ada was too proud, whatever her feelings might be, to express them to any living soul. To the world her aunt spoke of Mr. Latimer as of the dear friend of the family, as of one who had quite a fraternal regard for all the young people; but for Ada she now began to look out for a new connection in the gay world of London, to which now, for the first time, they went during the season. But a great change seemed to have come over the young beauty. It was the working of a deep, earnest love, her aunt imagined; and therefore, after having again unsuccessfully schemed and planned, she thought it wisest to leave things to themselves, and, in so doing, she returned to her former wishes regarding Latimer. She was convinced that he would not marry whilst abroad; and, in the meantime, the bent which Ada's mind seemed to have taken would only prepare her more completely to fascinate him on his return. All would be well, she doubted not, in the end; but as diplomacy was her passion, she could not help taking some steps to facilitate that end, and those steps were remarkably easy ones. Mr. Latimer's only sister, to whom he was greatly attached, and some



few years older than himself, had been married now several years to a Mr. Acton, a nephew of the good old dean, where poor Fanny Jeffkins had first lived in service. Mr. Latimer had spoken much and warmly of his sister to Ada; they met for the first time, since Ada was a mere child, at that large party at the deanery, for which poor Fanny Jeffkins had dressed Ada in her pink dress and tiara of pearls. Both ladies were much pleased with each other. Fortune favored Aunt Colville's schemes in so far, that Mr. Acton purchased a small estate in an adjoining county, where he built a cottage ornee, and the family came to reside within the last six months. Like Mrs. Colville, Mrs. Acton perhaps thought that Ada would be a suitable wife for her brother; she in the first place had appeared charmed by her beauty, and nearer acquaintance seemed not to have lessened the effect. Mrs. Colville considered the circumstance of her inviting Ada to her house for a long and intimate visit, to be a sure proof that she was tacitly forwarding the same object.

By the time, therefore, when Agnes came to reside at her uncle's, Aunt Colville had returned to her old opinions, and regarded Ada unquestionably as the future Mrs. Latimer. She began to take a most lively interest again in the Hays, and only regretted that she had not obtained a commission from him of general oversight during his absence. The only confidant in all her schemes and plans—not even excepting Ada herself, for to her she hinted nothing—was Mrs. Sam. Mrs. Sam and she spoke between themselves of Ada's marriage as of a settled thing, and never did they pass the gate of the Hays, or come even within sight of its chimneys, without feeling as if Ada were already mistress there.

Perhaps, however, the only person in the whole circle of her acquaintance, of whom Mrs. Colville stood at all in awe was this same Mr. Latimer. She had never ventured to scheme and speculate so boldly and so confidently when he was amongst them. There was a decision about him, a coolness, a mastery of himself, over which, when present, she felt that she had no power. And thus, now that he was away, even spite of his self-possession at parting, she felt more hopeful and certain, but at the same time more prudent than ever. Ada, during his absence, had refused several offers—of this she had informed Mrs. Acton; a great change, too, had come over her; she was no longer a coquette; she was quieter, graver, sadder, perhaps, but certainly not less lovely than when he left. It was evident, Mrs. Colville thought, that Ada was reserving herself for his return, and she was satisfied.

In this state of affairs came the news of Mr. Frank Lawford's death in London. Little as had been the intercourse between these two branches of the family, there had been growing secretly in the depths of the elder Mr. Lawford's heart, a yearning sentiment of good will and pity towards his younger, outcast brother. In the solitude of his sleepless nights he had thought upon him with tenderness; a sentiment that came, he knew not how, of charity and forbearance, prepared him for deeds of kindness. When, therefore, the news came of his brother's sudden death, he stood as it were self-arraigned and condemned for severity and neglect. And oh! how bitter is the sense that the time for kindness is gone by forever; that the heart is forever cold which one would now so fain have warmed and cheered with the kindly flame of affection. Bitter were the tears which Mr. Lawford shed, and it was with the utmost sincerity that he besought the bereaved members of his brother's family to accept of his aid and his good will.

Tom went to the funeral, and brought back such tidings of their hitherto overlooked relatives as only the more strengthened his father's inclinations. It was a very touching, though a very simple letter which Agnes, in the dark hour of her bereavement, had written to her uncle; but it had spoken eloquently to his heart.

"We will see what we can do for them,"

Aunt Colville had said: "we will see if we cannot do something for this poor girl, who really has written such a very proper and affecting letter."

She said this, at first, as the thought of the moment, rather to pacify her brother than anything else; but on after consideration, and especially after Tom had returned home, and brought word that his cousin Agnes, whose grief for her father's death seemed so deep, was a quiet, sensible girl, but not at all handsome, the disposition to serve her seemed to grow amazingly.

"She can read to my brother, and amuse him; she must have been used to a life of hardship, and living here will be quite an advantageous change to her," thought she to herself.

Mr. Lawford, who like his sister, calculated certainly upon Ada's marriage, conceived, as she had already done, the idea of his niece supplying to him the place of a daughter; "and then," thought he, "there is this advantage in her over my daughter—she will not be leaving me to get married. Ada has so many acquaintances, and is always going out. I am never sure of her for a day; nay, not even for an hour. Poor Frank's daughter will be very different; she will have no acquaintance but us, and we will make her happy amongst us."

"We will find her a home amongst us," said also Mrs. Sam Colville; "if she do not suit one she may suit another. She can have had no brighter prospects in life than we can offer her; it was such a thing of my uncle leaving no better provision for his children!"

"Poor man!" said Aunt Colville, with a sigh, "he was always improvident; ran counter to all our wishes; and this is no more than any of us ever expected. However, as my dear archdeacon used to say, 'we must all have charity one with another;' and now poor Frank is dead and gone, let his weaknesses and his errors die with him."

"Amen!" said Mrs. Sam.

"And," continued Aunt Colville, "I see no objection at all to having this Agnes with us: my brother is always fretful when Ada goes out; he likes to have young people about him; and I have often thought him a little unreasonable towards Ada, for a girl like her is naturally fond of society; and that was one reason why I was so willing for her to go to Mrs. Acton's; and therefore if my brother takes to Frank's daughter, and she turns out tractable and useful, nothing can be better; and she's not likely to marry; and as she is not handsome, and has no fortune, there will be no flirting and nonsense of that kind."

"There is no danger of Tom," said Mrs. Sam, with a very self-satisfying confidence.

"And then, if she be well-educated, as I dare say she is," continued Aunt Colville, "in course of time, if anything should happen to my poor brother, she can take the management of your little ones. Emily will want a governess in a few years—or Mrs. Acton might take her; for when Ada is married," said she, with a peculiar look, "one may reckon the Actons as a part of our own family."

Such were the designs of these two ladies, and such were their sentiments towards our poor Agnes—her uncle's, if not unmingled with selfishness, were certainly much kinder. His heart yearned towards her; and he meant, in showing good will toward her, to satisfy his soul, if possible, as regarded her father. The two in the family who seemed most indifferent with regard to her coming, who neither said nor acted anything, were Ada and her brother Tom. Ada, it might be supposed, was so much occupied with the now approaching return of Mr. Latimer, and with the visit she was about to pay to his sister, as to have no thoughts to spare for any less interesting subject. Besides, she was by no means what might be called a transparent character—Ada kept many of her thoughts and feelings to herself. Aunt Colville said "that she had enough, poor girl, to think of; and she did not at all wonder at her wish, to set off directly to Mrs. Acton's." As for Tom, nobody troubled themselves about him.

he went and came, and thought his own thoughts, and acted just as he pleased, without anybody wondering at anything he did.

## CHAPTER IX.

"I AM now at Lawford," wrote Agnes, to her mother, within a week of her arrival there, "at the home of my father's youth. Ah! so often as I have heard him describe this place! To me it was familiar as if I had had here a pre-existence—the trees, the brook, the very outline of the distant landscape. How differently do the good people here regard these things to what I do! To me they are sanctified by the holy spirit of love and death. My dear, dear father! and this was the place where he was born: where he passed the bright days of his childhood, and that happy youth, of which he retained such delightful remembrance. Thank God that his youth was happy!"

"On Sunday, we were at church! I fancied to myself the corner of the pew where my father sat when he alone of all the family went there; and when he sat and watched the rector's eldest daughter, sitting among her young brothers and sisters, and casting now and then from above her prayer-book, sly glances at her young lover! And just above the pew is the marble tablet to the memory of his mother. You know not with what a thrill I read of her sudden death, on her fifty-seventh birthday; it seemed to me as if those two awful days were blended in one: I lived over again their whole agony, and wept bitterly. A beautiful, white marble urn, exquisitely designed and executed, stands in the churchyard, between two dark, well-grown cypresses, in memory of her. The effect is extremely good. Were I rich, I would place here a monument to my father—but he needs none! Love has enshrined him in our hearts; and good works, and noble sentiments, in the hearts of thousands besides!"

"The weather, since I came, has been fine for the season; and under a mild but leaden December sky, I walked out one morning to explore the park and the immediate neighborhood. The fallen but undecayed leaves, and sombre but mild coloring of the landscape, accorded well with my feelings. I was quite alone, and enjoyed my ramble greatly. I found the brook, the Morley brook, where my father used to fish; it runs along the bottom of the park, through a succession of wild little dingles, which must be beautiful in spring and summer. It must have been here that my father lay and read in that old copy of Homer, in which, even to the last, he looked with such delight. I tried to find that bend of the brook where the old willow-tree grew, of which he spoke so often; but the brook seemed to have so many bends, and all the willows were so old and picturesque, that I could not tell which might have been pre-eminently his favorite. Here, too, must be that copse, all covered with moss, and bordered with primroses and violets, which he had described in his 'Poet' as being the favorite resort of Vernon in spring time; for here is the rookery, and Vernon lay among the primroses watching the rooks, as you remember, with his Greek Homer in his hand."

"I cannot tell you the effect which these old haunts produced on my mind: the spirit of these quiet, sylvan scenes, breathes in so much that my father has written, and it makes me indescribably sad; sad, when I think how he, who, of all men, loved nature so truly, and was so attached to this place, was an outcast from it. I think of the refreshment it would have been to have come here and gathered again 'these primroses by the river's brim;' and those to whom they belong have let them bloom and die, year after year, and never have drawn from them a holy or a refreshing sentiment. Poor Jeffkins, too! he, who used to bring my father the first spring flowers: who would walk so many miles to gather him the early violets; how sad and desolating a place has Lawford been to him! God only knows why such things are allowed to be. Poor Fanny, too! The strange and melancholy spirit of our interview saddened my parting with you. My journey here



was a gloomy one. My thoughts were entirely my own; for a very taciturn and bulky country couple, who were my fellow-travelers, interrupted them by not a single remark. My parting from you, the sense that I had no longer a home, and poor Fanny's unhappy fate, lay like dark and brooding clouds upon my heart; the only little cheering beam was, that the poor forlorn, and yet I trust not God-abandoned prodigal, would that night be restored to her father. Had you not left London so soon after me, you probably would have seen him—."

The next day.—Your letter, which this moment has arrived, distresses and alarms me. Jeffkins, you say, has not seen his daughter. Oh, God forbid that she has deceived us; or that she has again fallen into evil hands! Poor Jeffkins! his attention to you has indeed affected me. How good, how thoughtful, how really delicate is his conduct. Let no one talk of the bad hearts of the poor! Ah, dearest mother, is it not true, that the gratitude of these poor people has often left us mourning? A dark and sad mystery involves Fanny's conduct; and my heart bleeds for the anguish and agonizing uncertainty, which her father must experience. Here, as yet, her name has never been mentioned. You did well not to speak of the strange secret confided to me. It is safe, too, in my keeping; and God, if he designs me for an agent of good toward that unhappy, deserted child, will make all known to me at the right time. As yet, however, one part of poor Fanny's prophecy seems far from being fulfilled. There is a sort of coldness and distance between my cousin Tom and me. I know why, on my part. I cannot disconnect him, in my mind, from that poor, unhappy girl; and feel, as it were, unpleasantly conscious, in his presence, of the sad secret of which I am the depository. You ask about my cousin Ada. She left home, on a visit of some weeks, the third day after my arrival, and that without our having advanced toward any intimacy. Ada seems to me to be rather a paradox, a mixture of openness, or perhaps impulse, and decided reserve. She says occasionally abruptly kind things, for which one is not prepared, which give the idea that the impulses of her nature are good and kind; but pride, or reserve, or perhaps timidity, make her general conduct cold, and to me repulsive. Our bed-rooms adjoin, divided only by a dressing-room which opens to both, but which she keeps locked. She allowed her maid to pay me all little civilities. I am not an exacting person; I would have been thankful, at that time, for but one kind word or act. As it was, I sat in my solitary bed-room and wept. Do not think me petulant or unreasonable; but my heart, for that first night, was desolate, and felt how great had been its bereavement.

"The family consider Ada very clever. My Aunt Colville says that she is a true genius, and has great intellectual powers. I doubt it—at least so far as original talent goes. Handsome, however, she is unquestionably—nay beautiful. She has a fine, oval, Rutherford face, with those peculiar large, dove-like eyes, which my father called the family eyes, and which I now see are those of dear little Harry—and here I must put in a parenthesis. I have had a letter from those dear boys—a kind, beautiful letter. Arthur says that poor Harry is getting up his spirits famously, and has even had a little fight on his own account. Poor Harry! I cannot tell you how I was haunted by the sad expression of that dear child's face as he sat keeping back his tears, while they waited for the coach. Arthur is so handsome and manly, and so capable of defending himself—but God, and a good brother help poor Harry with his loving, gentle spirit, that never was meant for a tough warfare with hardship and unkindness! So much for a little thought, by way of parenthesis. I now return to my fair cousin Ada. Ada is the darling of the family, in part from being the youngest, in part also from her being so handsome, and from their having the idea of her great abilities. Aunt Colville says very much to me about Ada's powers of mind, and fine character; so also does Mrs. Sam; but as Ada herself, during

the short time we were together, rather shunned than courted intimacy with me, and did not betray any great originality of mind in any way; I cannot speak from my own knowledge.

"I hear a great deal said of a Mr. Latimer of the Hays, who is expected in the spring from the West Indies. I suspect him to be the fiance of Ada; it is with his sister that she is now visiting. According to report Mr. Latimer is the very summit of perfection; but when I consider their notions of perfection, which appear to be personified in Archdeacon Colville, I expect—pardon my heresy—nothing more remarkable than good looks—wealth which I know he has—and self-possession—perhaps self-esteem.

"You ask of my uncle, and my aunt Colville. Nothing could be kinder than my uncle's reception of me. I was taken into his room—a sort of inner library, where he spends most of his time. He said very little—but words were not needed; he kissed me—looked into my face, and wept. I wept too—and that abundantly, for my heart indeed was full; and I saw so plainly in my uncle a strong resemblance to my father—that peculiar cut of countenance, which made the last generation of the Lawfords so handsome. It was my father's face, only much older and without that expression of superior intellect which gave such a marked character to the face. My uncle wept as he spoke of my father's death, and lamented that 'politics and other things,' had separated them. His heart I am sure is kindly interested in me; and with him, in his little library, I feel at home. He is a great invalid, and suffers much from the gout and other maladies. In his intervals of ease, I read to him. His own children, he told me, do not like reading aloud, nor will they read what he wants. I read to him the newspaper daily. It comes in at breakfast, which is very late; and as we are then altogether, and mostly alone, I read it aloud, and Aunt Colville generally stays also to hear it. If my uncle were too ill to breakfast with the family, I would take it into the chamber, when his chocolate went in, and read it there: but as yet they say he is in unusual health. We read novels, of which he is very fond, and works of divinity; and he pays me the compliment of liking my reading—so did my dear father. Oh, my uncle knows not how often I have had to cheat my poor heart into the belief that I was again in papa's library reading to him! They have none of papa's works here, nor do I believe that they have, any of them, read a single page of his writing. They all hold extreme opinions in religion and politics; and no wonder, when Archdeacon Colville is their apostle. His works are here; thirteen volumes, bound in purple morocco, richly gilt. I was reading one of them one day, when Aunt Colville came in: she seemed greatly pleased, the only time I have ever seen her appear cordially satisfied with me. Her veneration for the archdeacon is extreme; and there are, after all, points of view from which her character is far from unamiable. To me, however, generally speaking, she is cold and harsh; she wishes me to devote myself to my uncle; but I fear that decided kindness towards me on his part will displease her. So also at the rectory—she wishes me to amuse the children, and to gain their affection, but were I, in mistake, to gain that of their mother, she would hardly forgive me. I must be subservient, humble, and useful to every one—I must give love and devotion, but I must look for none in return. Aunt Colville has a great deal of family pride; but the family consist only of herself, and her elder brother, and his descendants: we, if we would please her, must minister to these, we must have no little asprings on our own account; what little light we have, we must contribute to the family glory; we must sink ourselves to exalt them—and if we will do this, Aunt Colville will be as surely our friend and patron, as ever she was to poor Adolphus. But I must now conclude; I have yet to write to the dear boys. I treasure up every droll anecdote, every conundrum, every

amusing trait of character for them, that my letter may amuse them.

"Thank God, that you are so cheerful, and that you are surrounded by so much love, and so much repose! Ah, I once thought that you and I should never smile again; but the year goes on; and the summer, which, in the dark wintry days, seemed so far off, will come with its birds, its flowers, and its sunshine; and thus it is with our hearts! May it only please God, that we, whose hearts are one, may yet form one household; you and I, and those dear boys! I dare not think of it, but try to say, in all submission, Thy will, not mine, be done!

"Adieu, write often to your own  
"AGNES."

The winter was severe. Christmas came with its carol singers, in the snowy and frosty evenings; the church-bells chimed forth their sweet psalm-tunes; holly and ivy decorated the Hall and the rectory; the doles of fuel and beef were given to the poor; and the county newspaper, as it always did, made a paragraph about the well-known, seasonable munificence of the Lawfords of Lawford. There was a poetical sort of feudal sentiment about this Christmas at Lawford, which had its charm to Agnes; but still she felt, that here the poor and the rich were separated, spite of seasonable gifts, by a wide gulf, which no sincere kindly sympathy bridged over. Very different was all this from those little festivals of human love and human brotherhood which each successive Christmas had seen under her father's roof.

"I will take you with me this morning," said Aunt Colville to Agnes, on the day when the doles were distributed; thinking to impress her with the munificence of the great branch of the family.

Aunt Colville, enveloped in velvet and fur, sat in the great carriage, and Agnes took her seat beside her. She was in a very gracious mood, and as they drove along, pointed out the Grammar School, and the Alms-houses which had been endowed by the family.

"It is a proud thing," said Aunt Colville, "to be the main branch of an old line of ancestors—the direct family line, I believe, has no stain upon it—all its men were men of honor, who served their God and their king zealously and unflinchingly; and their women were noted for beauty and purity. I am proud of being a Lawford," said she with dignity; "and though, in the last generation, we had cause to deplore some things connected with the family, yet the main branch has ever retained its uprightness."

Agnes felt that a sting was contained in her aunt's words, and perhaps she might have replied, had they not now reached the village, from whence the church-wardens and other officials were distributing the squire's bounty; and as the great family coach slowly drove among them, hats were taken off, and a huzza welcomed them. Women, with children by the hand, or at the breast, were carrying away the outs of beef; and men and big boys were whirling away coals in barrows or hand-carts. Everybody looked eager, but by no means was there an expression of universal satisfaction on every face. Many were discontented; they believed that their neighbors were better supplied than themselves; they looked angry and envious.

"Yes," said Aunt Colville, as she sat in the great family coach, glancing through its plate-glass windows at the discontented faces around her, "it is a privilege to belong to the better classes of society, for there is a natural depravity and hardness about the poor."

"Pardon me, aunt," said Agnes, eager to vindicate the poor as a class, "but society has always dealt so hardly by the poor, it has made poverty and crime synonymous. The rich and the poor are not bound together by deeds of kindness and a spirit of brotherly consideration and forbearance: but they are separated by severe laws and enactments, which the rich have made to keep the poor in awe. Oh, aunt, is it not enough to harden and sour the very heart of poverty, when it craves from its fellow man the leave to toil and that is denied it?



Instead of accusing the poor of natural depravity, I only wonder at their forbearance and patience. What can the poor do in such cases but sink into despair, and out of despair plunge into crime; and then when we have made them criminals, we drive them farther from us by severe penalties. We make ourselves their oppressors—what wonder then if they hate us?"

"These are dangerous opinions," said Aunt Colville, impatiently, "the opinions of levelers and democrats. I know what the poor are, and how impossible it is to reform them. I know a great deal more about them than you do. It is hardly worth while arguing the subject, but still I must say a word or two; for instance, you say that the rich do not bind the poor to them by deeds of kindness; what is this very scene which you are witnessing? what was it that I did upwards of thirty years ago? I established Sunday and daily schools in this parish. I took care, at least my excellent father-in-law took care, that every child should be able to read, and should know its catechism thoroughly. He disseminated tracts; put down public-houses, and bowling-greens, and such places, which are frequented by the lowest and idlest class of characters; he expelled Methodists out of the parish, and established among the farmers and the more respectable inhabitants, an association for employing none but such as attended church regularly, and sent their children to school. But all these efforts were vain. Vice and immorality only the more increased; the use that was made of education was to read infidel books, and the whole neighborhood was full of poachers and every species of disreputable characters. It is perfectly absurd to hear you talking in that romantic sentimental way, and only shows your total ignorance of the subject. I know the poor well, and can safely testify, that there is something emphatically correct in styling the wealthy the *better classes* of society."

"It seems to me," returned Agnes, in a tone whose gentleness was meant to neutralize the boldness of a dissenting opinion, "that the late rector's well-intentioned but somewhat extreme efforts at reforming the parish were very much calculated to produce the effects they did."

Aunt Colville literally turned round, and looked Agnes in the face: but spite of this, she continued:

"Men inclined to Methodism—and such may be very good men, and very useful members of society—and men of physical activity, to whom the bowling-green would have furnished an escape-valve for their energies, would, under the changes which the rector introduced, be very likely to become poachers; more especially if they could not obtain employment without professing religious opinions, which perhaps they neither understood nor held."

"These are the kind of notions which I suppose my poor brother instilled into your mind," interrupted Aunt Colville, with a reprimanding countenance.

"My father was the friend of the poor," said Agnes, in reply; "and this I consider as one of his greatest honors. Like Jesus Christ, who was his example, he went among them, and talked with them, and by the force alone of love, and the persuasion of kindness, healed, if not their physical, yet their moral infirmities, which are even worse. The poor, like the beloved apostle, might almost literally be said to rest upon his bosom."

"I do not admire this way of talking," said her aunt; "and such opinions as you seem to hold are not seemly in a young lady. You must remember that you are now the niece of Mr. Lawford of Lawford; and I am sure it would grieve him, and all your friends here, to hear you expressing any Owenite or Benthamite notions. What would Mrs. Sam think, and the Actons, if they heard you talking thus? Your poor father, Agnes, did himself a deal of mischief by them; and, though I would not willingly speak ill of the dead, yet there are occasions when silence is criminal, and this I consider to be one of them."

"For heaven's sake," interrupted Agnes, with impetuous emotion, "do not say one word against my father. You none of you knew him, none of you can conceive his goodness and his real greatness; and let me beseech of you," said she, turning to her aunt with imploring eyes, "that whatever fault you may have to find with me, whatever displeasure my poor opinions may cause you, that you will breathe no reproaches against my father!"

There was something very mild and touching in the tone in which Agnes spoke; and in a softened accent, and laying her hand upon that of Agnes, Mrs. Colville replied:

"I wish not wantonly to hurt your feelings, Agnes; but you ought to know, that your poor father separated himself from his family, and cut off his own means of usefulness and his own advancement in life, by abandoning the old hereditary opinions of his family, and by adopting others which gentlemen ordinarily do not hold; therefore you must consider how painful, how unpleasant, how revolting it must be to us to have such opinions broached in our presence; and especially by one whom we have placed amongst us, and towards whom we wish to entertain favorable sentiments. I hope, therefore, that you will never let Mrs. Sam hear anything of the kind from your lips!"

Agnes made no reply; she bitterly felt her own dependence. A thousand contradictory emotions agitated her soul; but her heart was too full of words, and a quiet tear fell from her cheek to her knee.

Aunt Colville saw the tear, and was touched by it.

"We will drop this subject now," she said; "but when I have leisure and opportunity, I will relate such instances of depravity which have come under my own eye, as are really shocking to think of—things which have occurred in Lawford—and Lawford is not nearly so bad as many other places; but even in Lawford, I say, there have occurred cases of women abandoning their own children! At Lawford Hall, not so very long since, some wicked unnatural mother left her child but a few weeks old! Such things as these are awful, and enough to bring down the judgments of Heaven!"

"How, when, dear aunt, was a child left at Lawford?" asked Agnes, suddenly roused from the thoughts immediately connected with herself to the remembrance of poor Fanny Jeffkins' confession.

"It is a most unpleasant subject," said her aunt, "I cannot enter upon it now. Not another word about it now; for I see Mrs. Sam and the children, and we will take them up; but remember not a syllable about these things before Mrs. Sam!"

The carriage took up Mrs. Sam and the children; and Agnes was so absorbed by her aunt's words, and the thoughts which they gave rise to, that she displeased both ladies by taking no notice of "the darling Emily," who was destined for her future pupil.

Although Aunt Colville had desired that Mrs. Sam might never hear such heterodox opinions fall from Agnes' lips it was not long before that lady herself informed her of them.

It was no more, they said, than they might have expected; but what would the Barhams, and the Bridports, and the Actons and the dean and his lady say, if they heard such sentiments? They had the most benevolent desires for her improvement; and as her position in the family, for the present at least, seemed to be that of a companion and reader to her uncle, they would get him to make her read all the archdeacon's works, and such others also as would give her proper views of life and society. There was a deal of good in her, no doubt, they said, and they would do their duty by her; but it was a great deal better, however, that she should not go much into society with them, and there was a good excuse for her staying at home, and that was attending to her uncle.

"It is a good thing that my father is so fond of her," said Mrs. Sam, "for, poor thing, spite of all her accomplishments, and her talents, and

her easy graceful manners—and one cannot deny her all these—while she holds such opinions, even if she wanted a situation to-morrow, I could not give her one. Sam is so fond of catechizing, that he would draw out all her opinions, and quarrel with her the first day."

Agnes was set to read the first volumes of Archdeacon Colville's "Essays on Religious Opinions." It was a very heavy book; but the old gentleman felt it his duty, as his sister Colville recommended it, that not only it but the whole thirteen volumes of sermons, essays, and treatises must be gone through from the first page to the last. So she read, and he listened or dozed; and when he was tired—and he was very often as tired of listening as she of reading—the book was laid down, and they began to talk, which he very soon had found to be a pleasant way of spending time. He encouraged her to talk of her parents, of her brothers, of her former home and of the people she knew in London. Her uncle took a great delight in her society, and missed her when she was absent; he called her pet names, repaid her attentions by a kiss, and said that she was his youngest daughter, and that her very presence near him soothed his pain and his irritation. Poor Agnes, she did not easily tire of talking to her uncle of her home and her family, although she was often inclined to weep when she did so; but then the old man grew irritable if she wept, and therefore she soon learned to touch lightly on painful subjects, for both their sakes; and after the warning which her aunt had given her, carefully avoided touching on politics or the virtues of the poor.

Breakfast, which, as we have said, was not early at Lawford, was taken mostly in the little library where the old gentleman sat, that he might enjoy it with the family; and on these occasions it was, as the reader knows, the duty of Agnes to read from the morning paper the lighter news, and police reports, deaths, and casualties, of which he was very fond.

One morning, while thus reading, she came upon a paragraph which related that "considerable excitement was occasioned the day before, on the breaking of the ice in the river Lea, by the discovery of the body of a young woman, which appeared to have lain there some weeks. The body was first discovered by some boys, and a remarkable circumstance had led to its immediate recognition. The father of the young woman, who was by trade a silk-weaver"—Agnes paused for a moment, and then went on. "The father was walking on the bank of the river at the time, and joining in the crowd, recognized the body to be that of his daughter. The girl, it appeared, was of abandoned character, and had left the house of her father many months before. No injury, which could excite suspicion of murder, was found on her body, and it was suspected that she had committed suicide, as so many unfortunate females did. A small sum of money was found in her pocket, together with a letter, which, although almost illegible, appeared to be addressed to her father. She wore a small locket round her neck in which was a lock of dark hair, and a gold ring set with a small emerald. The name of the girl was Fanny Jeffkins"—Agnes said no more, but dropping the paper on her knee, clasped her hands and burst into tears.

"Jeffkins!" exclaimed Aunt Colville; "can it be that Fanny who lived with Mrs. Sam? But, bless me, Agnes," said she looking sternly at her niece, "what is amiss with you?"

"I was much attached to that unfortunate girl!" said Agnes.

"My dear!" exclaimed her uncle.

"Not at all to your credit," said Aunt Colville.

"I cannot explain to you," said Agnes, "the peculiar circumstances which make her death affecting to me. You could not understand it; but, wretched as she was, and abandoned as the world believed her, I was much attached to her, and her father, a man of many virtues and many sorrows, was a friend of my father's."

Aunt Colville looked petrified with horror.



"Thank Heaven," she said, "that there is no one present!" for though Tom was there, she considered him like no one.

Tom sat with his forehead on his hand, his cup of coffee untouched before him, and seemed to be reading from a book which lay open on the table. Outwardly he seemed an indifferent auditor of what passed, but in reality he felt as much agitated as Agnes herself.

"Not exactly a friend of your father's, my dear," said her uncle, willing if possible, to shield her from her aunt's displeasure.

"Yes," returned Agnes, firmly, "he was so, and one whom my father respected, and perhaps even loved. His attachment to my father was extreme."

"And this wretched abandoned creature," interrupted Aunt Colville, with indignation, "who was hurried to the face of her Maker with all her unrepented sins on her head, was perhaps a friend of yours!"

"In the truest sense of the word," replied Agnes, calmly, and in a voice of deep sorrow, "perhaps she was. I, at least, may say truly, that I was her friend; and strange as these words may seem to you, they are capable of such explanation as I believe would satisfy even you."

"I want no explanation," returned Aunt Colville. "I have said all along that this radicalism, this sympathy and friendship with the depraved lower classes, could not possibly lead to good."

"I do not at all understand what you can mean by attachment and friendship for abandoned characters, Agnes," said her uncle, "and we must have some explanation."

Agnes, without so much as glancing at Tom, who still maintained his look of cool indifference, began in a voice low with emotion to give a slight sketch of her father's acquaintance with Jeffkins.

"I must say," interrupted Aunt Colville, before she was half finished, "that it was not a reputable thing to be, as one may say, hand and glove with a drunken silk-weaver. The distinctions of society must be kept up: rich and poor are ordained by heaven, and are as much apart as light and darkness! No one has a higher sense of our Christian duties than I have, and I consider it as something quite revolting, this intimacy and attachment that you talk of."

"And was this young woman, this Fanny who lived with Mrs. Sam, this—this very disreputable young woman, really brought up with you?" asked her uncle, rousing himself into a little anger.

"Not brought up with me," said Agnes; "but I frequently saw her as a child. My parents never objected to my seeing her because she was poor; and when she grew up, and was so very lovely, and as we believed, so good, we all of us felt great interest in her"—Agnes paused. Tom hastily swallowed his coffee, and casting a hasty and anxious glance at his cousin, which she did not see, rose from the breakfast table, fearful lest his countenance might betray him, and stood by the fire with his back to the table.

"I remember," said Aunt Colville, "that your father wrote about her after she left Mrs. Sam. She was a good-for-nothing hussy, and I beg I may never hear you speak of her as your friend again. There must be distinctions in society—there is right and wrong; crime and depravity are not imaginary things; and those who try to palliate them make themselves in some degree parties to them."

Poor old Mr. Lawford perceived, by the tone of his sister's voice, how angry she was getting; and, wishing to spare his niece, put a random question to her, the most trying he could have put.

"And when did you see this unfortunate girl last?" asked he. Tom started as he heard it, and almost turned round.

"It is a painful subject, uncle," said Agnes. "You cannot conceive how painful! Ask me no more about it! But oh, for God's sake," said she, clasping her hands, and looking imploringly into his face, "do not impute evil to me!

It is true that I knew this poor girl to have been a sinner, but I knew also the intense misery which she endured. God is merciful—let man be so too! And for my part, I again beseech of you not to ascribe or impute evil to me. I believe it impossible for you or my aunt to understand perfectly my family's connection with poor Jeffkins and his unhappy daughter; but indeed there was no pollution in it. Christ himself had familiar intercourse with publicans and sinners, and permitted his feet to be bathed by the tears of Mary Magdalene!"

"Nay, nay, Agnes," interrupted her aunt, with increased displeasure, "let us have no more of this! If you compare yourself and your family to our blessed Lord, it is high time to put a stop to it. It is not the first time you have done so, and I can tell you that it is nothing short of blasphemy! Sit down, and let us have breakfast at once," said she, as if determined to put an end to the subject.

"I have breakfasted," said Tom, hastily, and went out.

"Allow me to leave the table," said Agnes, rising, and with tears in her eyes.

"Yes, yes, child, go!" said her uncle, in a hurried but gentle voice.

In the lobby she met Tom. He looked pale and agitated, but passed her without speaking; the next moment he returned, and offering her his hand, said, in a peculiar voice, "Do not, Agnes, let anything which my Aunt Colville said distress you. We all know how good you are. My aunt is a bad-tempered, formal, old woman."

Agnes thought of Tom's words through the day. His words, it is true, were commonplace enough, but yet the tone in which they were spoken affected her. The remembrance of his poor victim never left her mind, and she sighed as she thought that it was with tones as winning and as kind as these that he had betrayed her to her ruin.

And what really was Tom's state of mind as he went out on that fresh, clear morning into the park, where the first appearances of spring were visible after the dead sleep of winter? What, indeed! It was that of one whose impulses to good are naturally strong, and who now is writhing under the vulture beak of self-accusation, of remorse and sorrow. His feelings were agony, bitter agony. He walked rapidly, as if to escape from himself; and then, finding it impossible to do so, sauntered along, as if in the vain hope that the living anguish that tortured him might leave him behind.

Never as yet had Tom Lawford communicated any secret thought to a human being; now for the first time he yearned for a friend whose milder judgment might reconcile him to himself. He thought of Agnes, with her deep, womanly love, her tenderness, her forbearance towards the sinner, her pity, and her gentleness; and then the sense of the wrong and injustice which he had done to that hapless human being, whose life was now his sacrifice, humbled him to the dust, and for the first time he felt how grievously he had offended God and humanity.

## CHAPTER X.

WEEKS went on; and Aunt Colville and Mrs. Sam found more and more cause of displeasure and dissatisfaction in poor Agnes.

They talked to her uncle about the distress of mind which she still manifested regarding the unhappy end of that wretched Fanny Jeffkins; but the good old gentleman astonished them by taking her part.

It showed, he said, her goodness of heart, her humanity, her Christian charity; and besides this, the conversation he had had with her convinced him that a better girl or a more thorough gentlewoman did not exist. She was reading, he said, Archdeacon Colville's works—he had no doubt but that in time she would adopt opinions as rational as their own.

Aunt Colville was not at all either satisfied or convinced; and anxious for the sake of Mrs. Sam's little daughter, she resolved to become a third occasionally at the reading of her late

husband's works, that thus she might duly enforce the orthodoxy which they contained, and also that she might ascertain whether Agnes listened to them in a teachable and becoming spirit. This, however, was not altogether satisfactory to the old gentleman, nor yet to his niece; for, with all due reverence to the memory of his learned brother-in-law, he had always considered his works amazingly heavy reading; and now, in presence of his very observant relict, he had no chance of taking a quiet doze, or of listening to Agnes' arguments on the other side the question, and of conceding, in tone, which might pass either for conviction or indolence, "Well, well, child, we will argue it no farther—perhaps the archdeacon may be wrong after all!"

Nothing could be more notoriously quiet than Agnes' life at the Hall at this time. But her duties were few and not unpleasant, and the affection which her uncle evinced towards her was a cheering and heart-gladdening circumstance. At the bottom of her heart, however, lay a sad and depressing consciousness, which weighed all the more heavily because of the impossibility of making any one her confidant in it. In vain she questioned, directly and indirectly, of her aunt regarding the foundling child of which she had spoken; but the old lady, offended at what she called "her lax opinions," would not be communicative. Her uncle would tell her no more than that the child had been sent to the parish, and that a woman of indifferent character, at that time in the house, who no doubt knew of its parentage, had taken it out with her; and that was all that was known. Mrs. Sykes, Mrs. Colville's woman, confirmed the same; and Agnes began to fear that if this were the child of poor Fanny, no occasion would ever offer for her befriending it. Tom had relapsed again into his natural reserve and imperturbability, with this exception, that he too not unfrequently came also to hear the reading of the late archdeacon's sermons, which he never failed to abuse whenever private opportunity occurred. Now and then, however, Tom would talk of his sister, and seemed to have great pleasure in relating to Agnes anecdotes respecting her.

At length spring came, in the full mature bursting forth of its flowers and its birds' songs, and with it came Ada, and a new life at once began at Lawford. Aunt Colville gave up the readings in the library; receiving callers, or making calls, occupied the mornings, and the evenings were devoted to parties. A round of gayeties began, from which the old gentleman, with the nervous irritability of an invalid, withdrew himself, requiring all the more the attention of his niece. The idea never seemed to occur to him, or to anybody else, that he was unreasonable in requiring all her time and attention. "Are you happy?" asked her mother in many a letter, waiting with an anxious heart for the reply. "I am happy," said Agnes, "in the affection of my uncle. I am sure that he loves me; he encourages me to talk of my father; and now that Aunt Colville is too much occupied to join our reading parties, I am in hopes that in time I may gain permission to read to him my father's works. My lovely cousin, Ada, is as cold and indifferent in her behavior to me as ever; and yet now and then she has surprised me by some act or word of abrupt kindness and good feeling towards me; and then, when my heart has warmed towards her, she has again repelled me by her haughty coldness. Nothing can be gayer than the Hall at this time; every day my aunt Colville, Ada, and Mrs. Sam go out; the younger ladies often on horseback, attended by their servants, or joining other equestrian ladies and gentlemen of their acquaintance. In a few weeks Mr. Latimer returns home. A great deal is said on this subject. The Actons are now at the Hays to prepare for his reception; and to-morrow a Miss Bolton, a half sister of Mr. Acton, and a young lady, as I am told, of great fortune and beauty, comes here on a visit of a few days. Report says that Aunt Colville, in her matrimonial speculations,



has destined her for the wife of my cousin Tom. Poor Tom! he has come out of that icy shell of coldness and reserve, which are his characteristics, and which, I am beginning to think, hide many good qualities. Tom, under an outward show of great respect, has no love for Aunt Colville; he delights in quietly thwarting her; thence, perhaps, the true secret of his little attentions to me."

As Agnes said, all was gayety at the Hall. It was a late spring, but one of the most beautiful in nature; and the rooks in the old elm-trees were not busier building their nests, and rejoicing in the sunlit atmosphere which bathed their tree-tops, than were the inhabitants of the Hall themselves; there were parties on horseback in the mornings, and dinner-parties and dances in the evenings: this was on the outward surface, but there was an under-current of excitement and expectation in the hearts of Aunt Colville and Ada, which, though unconfessed by either lady to the other, was the mainspring of every action and sentiment; and this was the approaching return of Mr. Latimer. Wonderful was the kindness and attention shown to the Actons and to Miss Bolton; nothing was too much to do for them; and many were the drives which Aunt Colville took to the Hays, ostensibly to call on her friend, but to indulge, in reality, a sort of pride, by anticipation of the time when Ada might be its mistress.

Agnes did not join the gay equestrian parties, nor did any one ask her to do so. She was like a cipher in the house; and the old gentleman, who fancied himself so much more of an invalid since the commencement of the fine weather, shut himself up entirely in the little library. It did not occur to him that Agnes might like to join in some of the gayety that was going on, or that it was selfish to require through these fine, balmy days her incessant attention.

"She really is a good creature," said Mrs. Sam, one day after a long drive, who, having seen her head bending over a book in the little library as they went out, saw it in precisely the same position on her return.

"It is her duty," said Aunt Colville, coldly, "and her uncle is very fond of her. She has always been used to books and study, and she does not feel the fatigue of it as any of us should; she is naturally pale."

"Do you not think her pretty, and very intellectual-looking?" asked Miss Bolton.

"She is a noble creature!" exclaimed Ada, startling every one by her energy, "and some day or other I shall tell her so!"

Agnes was sitting at the library window one splendid morning, waiting for the ringing of her uncle's bell, which was to summon her to the inner room, when Tom entered, as if by accident.

"You here!" he exclaimed, "I thought you were out with the rest of them."

"No," said Agnes, wondering how he could have thought so; "I am waiting to read to my uncle."

"You'll ruin your health," said Tom, "with all this reading: I thought I saw you with the rest of them."

"No!" said Agnes, smiling at what she knew must be a false assertion.

"But you went out with them yesterday?" said he.

"No!" said she, and again laughed, for Tom himself was of the yesterday's riding-party.

"Do you pretend then to say that you never go out?" asked Tom, as if in perfect ignorance of all that went on.

At that moment the bell rang, and Agnes turned to go, taking the seventh volume of Archdeacon Colville's works from the library table.

"You shall not sit reading all day long," said Tom, decidedly; "it is downright tyranny and selfishness of anyone to require it; you look very pale and ill. You shall go and take a walk round the park. I am quite vexed that they are gone without you; I wish I had only known it before!"

Again the bell rang.

"Thank you, cousin Tom," said Agnes, sur-

prised and somewhat affected by his kindness, "but indeed I cannot go this morning; my uncle expects me."

"It is enough to kill you," said Tom, looking very earnest, "and you shall not read this morning. I am not very fond of reading aloud, especially such chopped straw as this," said he, taking the book forcibly from her, "but for once I'll do it."

"I shall read to you this morning," said he, entering his father's room; "Agnes must go out now and then; she looks quite ill; I wonder that Mrs. Sam or Ada never think about her. I told my Aunt Colville a month ago; and Agnes says that she has never been out!"

The old man looked astonished, and asked her if she were ill, and told her rather sharply that if she were so, she ought to have told him, "for," said he, "I do not think you have ever found me unreasonable."

"I am not ill, uncle," returned Agnes. "Then why did you complain, child?" asked he pettishly.

"Nor did I complain," said she smiling; "but my cousin Tom was so kind."

"It's only right that she should go out into the fresh air sometimes—every day she ought to"—said Tom, interrupting her.

"Yes, yes, to be sure it is," said the old man; "but then, who is to read to me?"

"I shall read to you," exclaimed Tom, "I am not fond of Tom's reading," said the old man; "but you should have some fresh air. I wonder Mrs. Colville or somebody does not think of it."

Nothing touches one more than kindness and consideration where it was not expected; and, as Agnes that morning took the walk which Tom had desired her to take, and thought of poor Fanny Jeffkins and her strange prophecy, "He cannot help loving you, and you cannot help loving him," came vividly to her mind. She recalled his whole behavior during the time she had been at Lawford, his outward reserve and pride, and his many little acts of kindness. Nobody evidently thought as much about, or cared as much for her as he did. Her uncle might love her, but there was a selfish exaction in his love. Her Aunt Colville treated her with harshness as an inferior; Mrs. Sam narrowly watched all her words and actions to detect something improper in them. Ada was absorbed by pleasure and her own occupation; she was cold and haughty, and repelled every little attempt of kindness on the part of Agnes. The friends of the house came and went, and no one introduced her to them. Poor Agnes! she wept as she walked on through that primrose covered copse, of which her father in boyhood had been so fond, and which she had regarded as a place of precious memories; but, strange to say, on that morning her thoughts were not of her father. An indescribable sadness lay on her soul which the gushing golden sunshine and the sweet jargon of the birds among the budding, seemed only to mock. A deep and living sense came over her, of her really friendless and forlorn condition, of her state of dependence and isolation, even among her own kindred; she thought of her willingness to love those who would not accept her love; and then came a dread and apprehension lest she should give her love where her sense of honor had hitherto so strongly forbidden it. On the one hand, the dead body of poor Fanny Jeffkins seemed to warn her back with all her wrongs, and her hapless fall and fate; on the other, stood Fanny's betrayer, the one true heart among so many cold ones, with his quiet deeds of kindness, his thoughtfulness, his voice which had such a touching tenderness in it—and her heart seemed pleading for him.

"Oh, gracious Father in Heaven," sighed she, "strengthen me to resist the tempter; give me strength to distinguish right from wrong, for I am weak and ready to fall!"

Strengthened and calmed by her mental prayer, Agnes walked on. In the farthest copse she heard the sound of children's voices, and soon saw a little group, as she imagined, from the neighboring hamlet, gathering flowers and

making chains of dandelion stems, with which they were ornamenting a bright-eyed auburn-locked cherub of a child, which was seated in the lap of the eldest girl. The baby, which might be about a year and a half old, was laughing and screaming with delight, and throwing about his beautiful rounded limbs in an ecstasy of childish glee. It was a lovely picturesque group, and instantly arrested both Agnes' thoughts and steps.

"What a beautiful child!" said she, putting back the rich curls from his sunny forehead; "is he your brother?" asked she, addressing the girl who held him.

"Yes," said the girl, but with a peculiar hesitation in her manner, which made Agnes again question her.

"Oh yes, miss, all the same as brother," returned the girl, coloring; "mother always reckons him one of the family," said she, and hugged him to her bosom.

Agnes seated herself upon a fallen tree beside them, and the two other children, a boy in a somewhat ragged suit, and another wild urchin in petticoats, betook themselves to a little distance, wondering what the lady had got to say.

"Is this beautiful little creature an orphan then?" asked Agnes, interested both in the baby and the girl who held him so lovingly in her arms.

"I don't know," returned she; "but the squire sent him to the house when we were there; and as our little baby died, mother took him, and so he has lived with us, and we love him as if he were our own."

"And where is your mother?" inquired Agnes.

"Oh, miss," said the girl, tears at once filling her eyes, "mother is very ill, and I must now go to her."

"I too will go with you," said Agnes, and accompanied the girl with the child in her arms, half a mile farther on, down into a deep, secluded, woodland lane, where, at some distance, stood a green caravan, from the red chimney of which ascended a thin blue smoke. The ragged lad and the urchin in petticoats were not far off.

"Is that your home?" asked Agnes, comprehending at once that these were some of those wandering potters or tinkers which were not unfrequent in the neighborhood, and against whom, as she had heard, her uncle, in the days of his magisterial activity, had waged war so desperately.

The girl told her, that her father sold brushes and wooden ware, and went up and down the country, and that her elder brother went with him. Their mother, however, who had been ill some time, and was now a deal worse, was in the caravan which they saw, and that she would now run and apprise her of the visitor who was coming. Agnes offered to hold the beautiful child, but he clung to his young nurse, and in their absence she tried to make friends with the other two children, who were hiding under the caravan; but at her first word they started up and ran away, and then, half in bashfulness, and half in petulance, threw pebbles and little pellets of earth at her.

Presently, however, she was invited by the elder girl up the steps of the caravan; and entering, she found an anxious, sorrowful-looking woman, with many a sign of poverty about her, and who, evidently far gone in consumption, was almost too weak to rise to receive her visitor. Agnes was touched by the first glance at the sick woman and her abode, and seating herself beside her, invited her kindly to speak freely of her present and past condition.

"We belong to the parish of Lawford," said the woman; both my husband and me, and now I am come back to die here."

"Perhaps not," said Agnes, kindly and hopefully; "we have the summer before us."

"Very true, miss," said she, "but I shall not see through the summer; and then God knows what is to become of the children, and little Johnny!—that's what preys on my mind!" and with this she wept bitterly.



"But little Johnny is not your son?" inquired Agnes.

"In one sense, no," said the woman, "and that is all the more distressing to me. You see, miss, my own baby died—we were in the poor-house, for ours has been a hard life—and as this had no one to own it, neither father nor mother, I took it for my own. My husband was as good and well-meaning a man as ever trod in shoe-leather when we married; but he offended the squire and the rector with joining a political club in Leicester. He was a reading man, and was much sought after at clubs and ale-houses, because he could speak very well. He was then a sort of under bailiff on the squire's farm. But envious folks told lies of him to his employer and the rector; and he was young and thoughtless in those days, and would not be warned to avoid even the appearance of evil; so he lost first one place, and then another. And the squire's hardness and severity, and the rector's together, awoke in him a spirit of hatred and ill-will. We had children, and we fell into poverty: one article of furniture after another was pawned and sold to get us bread. Nobody would give my husband a character; and our very neighbors, who had known us in our better days, looked shy on us. Oh, miss, kindness and confidence keep up a man's self-respect more than anything else! We came soon to feel as if our being poor had degraded and debased us! My husband went to Leicester to get employment, but none was to be had. He came back, after an absence of some weeks, famished. It was winter-time; we had four children then living—when my husband had left home there were five; but one had died while he was away, and the parish had buried it. I expected that my husband would have grieved sorely, but he did not; he shed not a tear: he only said that he wished the other four were under the sod with little Bessy. I was expecting to become a mother again almost daily; we had no food; house-rent was going on; we were in despair; and oh, God help the poor who are driven to despair! It was winter-time—a black, bitter frost—and we were dying of cold and hunger. My husband had become reckless, and almost ferocious. He called the rich tyrants; and ground and gnashed his teeth when he heard the children cry. My time approached, and I sent to old Mrs. Colville to beg help: but she sent me word that she could relieve none but persons of good character. At that moment the children, who had gone out to beg, came home crying from cold and hunger. My husband was roused to fury—he went out swearing a fearful oath. The next day we had plenty to eat; we feasted—us and the children: God knows how we had needed food before. The third day after that my husband was taken up for a poacher, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and hard labor, and we were taken into the house. In the midst of disgrace and poverty, and distress of mind, my child was born. The night that it was born I heard the woman talking of a young child which had been found at the Hall gates!"

Agnes started at these words, and breathlessly awaited for the continuation of the woman's story.

"It made a great talk in the house," she continued; "some said one thing and some another; but the squire sent the child to the house, and old Mrs. Colville came herself. She was very angry, and said that it was a proof of the wickedness and hard-heartedness of the poor, because this child was abandoned by its mother. Some of the poor folks in the house sided with her, and others took against her. I, for my part, who had gone through so much, thought that despair, such as we had felt, had perhaps closed the heart of this child's mother against it, and I had pity on both it and her. There was nobody in the house to nurse it but me. They gave me good food, and plenty of it, and my bodily strength soon returned, but my own baby was sickly, and died. My heart clung to the nursing that had no mother to cherish it: so I gave to it my baby's name, and

said that it should be mine in the place of the one I had lost. Nobody made any objection—Mrs. Colville even approved, and sent to me then a bundle of baby-clothes.

"At length the time came when my husband's imprisonment was at an end. He returned home—if home that might be called which was no more than a roof to cover us. The six months of his imprisonment had changed his very nature. He had associated with men ten times worse than himself; he knew now that he was a branded man, and he was in reality depraved. The severest misery that I endured was in perceiving the change that was come over him. When he heard that my baby was dead, and that in its stead I had adopted another, he was very angry. He refused to let me have it—he threatened to tear it from my breast. It was not ours, he said, and we would not burden ourselves with it. The child was dear to me as my own flesh and blood"—The poor woman paused; she wiped the drops of sweat which stood upon her brow, and seemed overcome and repressed by the remembrance.

Agnes listened in breathless interest, and without saying a word, wiped away her own tears.

"It would have broken my heart," continued the woman, after a few moments, "to have parted with the child; but, fortunately, a letter came from some unknown hand, offering to my husband the sum of ten pounds on condition of his adopting the child, and removing from the parish. Ten pounds to a man in my husband's circumstances was a sufficient inducement to do even more than this. He laid in a little stock of such articles as are used in country-places, and we began our life of wandering. Success attended us—but my husband was no longer the open-hearted man he had been. A hard, cold, griping spirit had taken possession of him; he hated the rich, and had neither compassion for, nor faith in the poor. We now travel about from place to place. The life suits him and the boys. I took cold the first winter we were out; for it is perishingly cold o' nights in the caravan. He has bad associates, and is brutal and surly. He never has liked the child, God knows why, though it was the means of his having a livelihood in his hands. When I am gone, it will have a hard life among them."

"But," said Agnes, "you have a daughter, a kind-hearted girl, who loves the child."

"Ah, miss," said the mother, with a deep sigh, "my husband will bring a stepmother to the caravan—I know it all! I have seen her, a stout, strapping quean, the head taller than me. She was in jail when my husband was there, and Heaven knows how she has gained so much influence over him. She has offered to come here to nurse me, and take care of the children; but no!" said she, raising herself, and with an almost fierce expression in her hollow eyes, "let her come into the caravan if she dare, while the breath is in my body!"

There was something desperate and almost savage in the woman's tone and manner; and the little child that was playing on the floor of the caravan, looked up in her face, and, terrified, began to cry. Agnes took him on her knee, and soothed him; she stroked his hair, and caressed him tenderly. This then was the child which had been committed to her care and love, by his unhappy mother. His father, as the letter from the unknown hand and the ten pounds proved, had acknowledged his claim. She fancied that in his clear eyes and his peach-like complexion, she could trace a resemblance to his wretched mother. A deep sympathy, an inexpressible tenderness towards him, filled her heart, and while her tears fell upon his curling hair, she clasped him in her arms, and he, no longer afraid, looked up into her face with the beautiful confidence of childhood, and smiled.

"God knows," said the poor woman, as if suddenly awoke to a new idea, "if I have done well in talking thus freely to you of our affairs; I know not how I came to do it—but surely, miss, you will not in any way betray me!"

"Indeed I will not," said Agnes, in a tone of

warm sincerity, "and I will come again to see you, nor will the child be uncared for; God will send him friends!"

With these, and other such words, she took her leave; and the woman, assured and some way comforted by her presence, watched her through the open door of the caravan till the windings of the lane concealed her from sight.

This strange and unexpected discovery agitated Agnes greatly, and as she hastily pursued her way back to the Hall, she endeavored to ascertain what was for her the best mode of action; but she could not decide, and with her mind still in a perfect tumult of feeling, she reached the Hall, amazed and half-alarmed to find how long she had been absent. Her Cousin Tom's groom waited at the door with his horse, and the ladies were returned. As she passed the drawing-room door, she heard an eager discussion among them, and presently Ada's voice, which said, "There is Agnes, ask her."

She was called in, and found the table and sofa covered with materials for splendid evening and ball dresses. Old Mrs. Colville and the young ladies were making purchases for a grand party, which was to take place in the neighborhood in about a fortnight, and by which time it was expected that Mr. Latimer would be returned. Tom was with the ladies, and there was now a difference of opinion with regard to Ada's dress, whether it was to be a silver gauze over pink satin, or a gold-sprigged muslin over white. Ada, secretly remembering the night at the deanery, when she wore the pink brocade, and made so much impression on Mr. Latimer, inclined to a dress of the same color; her brother, Mrs. Sam, and Miss Bolton, advocated the white.

"Here is Agnes, let us hear her opinion," said Tom, who from the window had seen her approach.

"There is no need to ask her," said Aunt Colville.

"There is Agnes, ask her!" said Ada, without noticing her aunt's words, as she heard her step on the stairs.

Agnes was called in, and the important question proposed to her, and the respective elegancies of each dress dwelt upon at some length.

Poor Agnes! she was in no state of mind, just then, to enter fully into the merits of a ball-dress; besides which, she was alarmed to think of having apparently neglected her uncle so long.

"They are both beautiful," said Agnes; "I do not know indeed to which to give the preference."

"But which do you think will suit Ada the best?" asked Miss Bolton.

Agnes considered for a moment, glancing first at her beautiful cousin, and then at the two dresses as they hung side by side; "I think the pink would suit her best," said Agnes, "but now indeed I must go."

"Stop!" cried Tom: but Agnes went, and then turning to his sister he inquired if Agnes would not be of the party.

"How can she?" said his aunt, impatiently. "She must stop at home with her uncle; you know how difficult he has been to manage this morning; it is thoughtless of her to go out in this way!"

Tom began eagerly to say that his father had not been impatient; and that his having got out in his bath-chair was a very good thing; and then, again turning to his sister, he inquired whether Agnes was not to be of the party.

Ada said she did not know; she had not been invited; but there was no objection to her going with them.

"My dear," interrupted Mrs. Colville, "how can she go in her mourning, which is very shabby? Poor thing! she would be very uncomfortable in such a party."

"Ladies can dress themselves with a deal of taste and elegance even in mourning," said Tom, pertinaciously.

"Certainly," said Ada; "and if Agnes really were going, there are some beautiful things even here which would be very becoming to her. Suppose, aunt, we were to buy her one."



"My dear," returned Mrs. Colville, "what is the use of taking people out of their sphere, Agnes cannot go out everywhere with us. Besides, there would not be room in the carriage. In a little while we shall be having little rural parties and quiet dinners," said she, recollecting that these things were to Mr. Latimer's taste, "and then we can take her with us. At present let her attend to her duties; besides, her position in life does not fit her for general society."

"But Miss Agnes Lawford, in point of position, is equal to any of us," said Miss Bolton; "and I am sure that Mrs. Acton would include her in every invitation she gave."

Tom looked approvingly on the young lady; and Mrs. Colville, who seemed not to hear what was said, turned to her favorite niece, and asked whether she had decided on the pink or the white dress.

"I have decided on the pink dress," said Ada.

Tom had that morning induced his father to go out in his bath-chair; the exercise and the fresh air had done him good: he was unusually cheerful; declared that he would have no more of Archdeacon Colville that day, and that Agnes must sit down and amuse him. Poor Agnes was not at all in a humor for amusing anybody: her uncle said that she was very dull and stupid, and he could not think what was amiss with her, and really, if walking did her no more good, she had better stay at home. From that day, however, the old gentleman went out daily himself, and Agnes had thus a few hours for leisure, if not for enjoyment. The thoughts of the poor inmates of the caravan were for ever present to her mind, and it was not many days before she again betook herself to the woodland lane, to inquire after the sick woman, and to see the child which had so painful and so peculiar an interest for her. But the lane was solitary from one end to the other—the caravan and its people were gone. A fear took possession of her mind lest they were gone forever, and she reproached herself for having done so little, where so much was required from her.

Agnes could not but think of her Cousin Tom—many things obtruded upon her mind, and nothing less than his kindness and sympathy towards her, so different from the cold, proud Ada. And why is Ada so cold and proud, and why is my Aunt Colville so austere and unkind? questioned she painfully, many a time. Ah, she felt so bitterly that it was not home; and yet all the more did home-affections and home-pleasures cling about her heart! She really had no home—she was dependent, and was made to feel her dependence. No one seemed to have sympathy with her or kindness for her—no one but her old infirm uncle and her Cousin Tom; her uncle she really loved, and was ready to serve with all her might—but Tom! Ah, poor Agnes! how she feared any insidious, sliding sentiment of love entering her heart for him! The little child, and poor Jeffkins and his daughter, warred in her soul against him. He is selfish and cold-hearted, said she, and nothing but my miserable, friendless condition makes my heart weakly incline to him! Thus she reasoned and pondered; and all this reasoning and pondering on his character and conduct might have been perilous to her peace, had she not endeavored to act in an open, straightforward course, and as far as she could see it in the entire fulfillment of her duty. She had come to Lawford with no definite idea of the place she was to occupy in the family, whether she was to be guest, adopted daughter, or humble domestic friend. All was in darkness around her; but she soon found out one little straight forward path of duty, and that was devotion to her uncle; and now, more than ever, she resolved to keep herself to that, and leave the rest to God. For this reason she was careful in no way to obtrude herself on any one of the family or their guests; and such hours as were not spent in attendance on her uncle, she spent either in walking or in her own chamber, where she could at least command solitude and the indulgence of her own thoughts.

A day or two after that on which the dresses for the grand party were purchased, Tom Lawford surprised his sister Ada, by asking her to come into his room where he had something of importance to consult her upon. Her heart beat violently, and she thought that it must be connected with Latimer.

"I want to take you into my council, Ada," said he, speaking as if with difficulty, which really was the case, for he had done violence to his natural reserve on this occasion.

Ada stood looking at him in silence awaiting his words.

"My aunt and Mrs. Sam," said he, "spoke the other day of Agnes' dress not being fit to appear in society in; now, Ada, will you give her a dress? will you get a dress made for her?"

Ada smiled, and Tom felt ready to repent of what he had done.

"It would not be agreeable to her," said he, assuming at once an air of boldness and decision, "nor should I like her to know that I made her a present."

Ada smiled, thinking to herself that her brother was captivated by this quiet and gentle cousin.

"I admire it in you, Tom," said she, speaking in her occasionally energetic manner, "and I will assist you any way that I can. Agnes is a very good girl, and my heart often reproaches me regarding her; and her life is dull enough here. But let me see what you have purchased."

Tom never felt so awkward in his life before, as when he drew forth a considerable packet, and displayed to his sister the costly dress he had purchased.

Ada looked at it with surprise, and said not a word.

"You do not approve of what I have done," said Tom.

"Yes, I do, with all my heart," said Ada, "but what will my aunt say?"

"Oh!" said Tom, at once struck by a new and bright idea, "the present is not mine, it is my father's, only I was commissioned by him to purchase it."

"Very peculiar of my father," said Ada, smiling, "to commission you to purchase a lady's dress; but, never mind! I admire your thoughtfulness and your kindness," said she, hastily putting the things together.

"Never let any one know," said Tom, "that this gift is from me. Above all things, never let her know it, else I should hate to see her wearing it!"

"It is my father's gift," said Ada, smiling again.

"And must be kept a profound secret till the night of the party," said Tom, "and then she is to go with us."

"She shall," said Ada.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE days went on, and the time of Mr. Latimer's return was at hand. Agnes had heard so much of him, and saw so plainly the excitement which his expected presence occasioned, that she, too, could not help having a great curiosity about him. Her uncle had described him over and over again—had described him as handsome, good, and clever, unlike every one else of their acquaintance; the only drawback being that he was a little, the least in the world, inclined to whigism; but of that, as he grew older, he would mend, said the old gentleman, consolingly. He was so good a landlord, so wise a magistrate, so fine a scholar, said he; he was quite sure that Agnes had never seen his equal among all the great and learned people that she had seen in London! Agnes listened; and, spite of her curiosity, a sort of reaction was occasioned in her mind.

"My uncle's idea of excellence," thought she, "are so different from mine, that I am sure to be disappointed. I have seen more men of intellect than any of the good people here, and finer scholars, and more perfect gentlemen; and I know that he will fall far short of my standard of perfection."

This skepticism was, however, a little staggered one morning, when Mrs. Acton, not finding either Mrs. Colville or Ada at home, introduced herself into the library, where Agnes sat with her uncle. This, then, was Mr. Latimer's sister, with that bright, intelligent, kind countenance! It was possible that her brother might be like her, and if so, he must be all that his friends described him. Never had anyone yet at Lawford shown to Agnes the same consideration and attention as this lady; and yet she knew that Agnes was poor, was a dependent in the family. Had she been a countess in her own right, she could not have received more marked attention. "As Mr. Frank Lawford's daughter," said she to the old gentleman, when Agnes was absent from the room for a moment, "she is to me entirely interesting—and what a beautiful countenance she has!"

"Dear me! we never reckoned her handsome; hardly good-looking," said the old gentleman, quite astonished and yet pleased, for Agnes was very dear to him.

With, as it were, an instinctive sense, Agnes felt that Mrs. Acton was a kindred spirit, that she belonged to the class of mind to which she was allied, and with whom she had hitherto lived. A sentiment of inexpressible sadness oppressed her heart, she knew not why—an anxiety, a tenderness that made her long to weep upon the bosom of such a friend. It was as if, for the first time since her father's death, she breathed the spirit of her own home. Not a word, however, of this was expressed; but Mrs. Acton might have divined it, for, at parting, she pressed a warm kiss on Agnes' lips, and expressed a desire that they might often meet, that they might be friends.

Mrs. Acton, during her call, mentioned the great party which was at hand, and said she hoped that they might meet there. She also congratulated Agnes on the friendship that must subsist between her Cousin Ada and herself. She spoke of Ada with warmth and kindness; called her a noble and a generous-hearted girl, and said that she considered her as beautiful in mind as in person. Agnes was grieved that she could not respond as warmly as she saw was expected to the praises of her cousin, and felt, as she had often done before, how differently things and characters present themselves to the rich and the poor, to the powerful and the dependent.

It was now the last week in May, and the whole country was one gush of mature, vernal beauty. "Glorious weather!" all the world said, "for the grand party at Merley Park!" Nothing had been talked of but this party for weeks, and since the time when Mrs. Acton had expressed a wish and an expectation of meeting Agnes there, the desire to go had taken possession of her mind.

"Is Agnes going to Merley Park on Wednesday?" asked old Mr. Lawford, one day, from his sister Colville.

Agnes' heart beat, and she glanced to her aunt for an answer.

"She has not been asked," said Aunt Colville; "but that is not of so much consequence; the question is, can you spare her, and whether she wishes to go?" said she, looking at Agnes, with an expression that said as plainly as words "of course you do not!"

"I should very much like to go," replied Agnes, decidedly, but timidly.

"You should!" said Aunt Colville, in a tone of bitter surprise; "but there are many things to be considered. I don't very well see how we can make room in the carriage. I dislike crowding on such occasions; there will be Mr. and Mrs. Sam, Ada and myself."

"Sam can go with me," said Tom, who was present; "or, Mr. and Mrs. Sam can drive together."

"And then your dress," continued Aunt Colville, "it would not do to go badly dressed."

"I will give her a dress," said her uncle; "see that she has a handsome one; I know that Mrs. Acton will expect to see her there."

"We must see if you are well enough, brother," continued the pertinacious old lady;



"but you know that you are often very poorly in an evening. You have often kept Ada and me at home; and I know that Agnes would not wish to go, unless it were quite convenient. There is a large party, and I don't know whether we ought to take an additional one with us; and there will be plenty of opportunities besides this, of her going out with us."

Agnes felt wounded; to her it seemed as if no one wished her to go, and with an agitation of voice which she in vain tried to repress, she replied that she would stay at home.

"Well, I see no great hardship in it," said Mrs. Colville, "and I think it better that you should."

No more was said; visitors were announced, and the subject, as Agnes believed, passed from every mind but her own.

The day of the party was at hand, and news came to the Hall that Mr. Latimer had arrived at home. They expected to meet him for the first time at Merley Park. A stillness and repose seemed, for some days past, to have fallen upon the household at Lawford, as of intense and almost breathless expectation. Ada was unusually calm and pale, and her beautiful countenance had a pensive, nay, almost anxious expression, which Agnes interpreted as the expression of intense love. Mrs. Sam had long interviews with Mrs. Colville, but about what nobody knew.

The beautiful dresses for the party came home on the day it was to take place, and with them the one for Agnes. Mrs. Colville was amazed. She had no idea, she said, that her brother had really given an order for one. No less surprised was Agnes; a very natural reaction took place in her own mind; she had been unjust to them; they were kinder to her than she had imagined. She was filled with gratitude and love; her countenance beamed with happiness. The surprise of such unlooked-for kindness and the anticipation of now really meeting Mrs. Acton that very night, and seeing Mr. Latimer, filled her with a quiet animation which gave altogether a new expression to her whole person. With affectionate gratitude she hastened to her uncle, to thank him for his munificent present. "I know that I owe all this to you, dear uncle," she said; but much as I should like to go, if I thought you would miss me, or that you were not so well, I would gladly stop at home."

What a blessed feeling, capable of every sacrifice, is that of love and gratitude!

The old gentleman was as much pleased as she was. He ordered her to put on her new dress, and come down to be looked at. He smiled and kissed her, and said that she really was a very lovely girl, and that he had no idea that she could look so handsome. He insisted on Ada and Aunt Colville coming down to see her. But Aunt Colville was at that moment busy; she was in Ada's dressing-room, passing judgment on that young lady's dress; for her toilette on this evening was of particular importance, and nothing could exceed its elegance.

"Have you seen my little Agnes?" asked Mr. Lawford, as, half an hour afterwards, Aunt Colville entered. "She is really quite charming!"

"I have," said Mrs. Colville; "but I must tell you, brother, that I had a great deal rather she did not go. It never was my wish that she should; we have no room for her in the carriage, and she is not expected. She knows nobody who will be there; she will have to sit all the evening without dancing! You do not consider these things!"

"She'll get partners," said her uncle, "never fear. If I were young, I should fall in love with her."

"Well, Mr. Lawford," said Mrs. Colville, raising herself with dignity, "I can tell you, once for all, that I am not going to take her. I had left the thing quite satisfactorily arranged; she had no expectation till you put it into her head; and I must tell you that it is no kindness to take her out to such parties. What is she, in fact?—but a sort of domestic!"

"She is my niece!" said Mr. Lawford, in a towering passion, "and I insist upon it that she goes!"

"I shall not take her!" said the lady, with decision.

The two might have proceeded to even fiercer contention had they not, at this moment, been interrupted by Agnes herself, who, still in her new dress, and with eager and delighted astonishment in her countenance, entered with a set of splendid jet ornaments in her hand. The fact was, that when she returned to her chamber, and was about to take off her dress, her eye was caught by a carefully-wrapped-up packet on her toilette table, addressed to herself. She opened it, and found it to contain these ornaments.

Who had given them to her? was her first question. How kind and generous everyone was to her! thought she; and, believing the donor to be her Cousin Ada, she entered her dressing-room with a freedom which she had never used before.

"I know, dearest Ada," said she, "that you have given me these. How beautiful they are—exactly the ornaments I want. How you all make me love you!"

"I have not given them to you," replied Ada, as much astonished as her cousin. "I never saw them before!"

"Then to whom am I obliged?" asked Agnes.

"Perhaps to papa," returned Ada, thinking that very likely this conjecture was not true, however.

With this, Agnes hastened to her uncle, and entered, as we have seen, in the midst of contention regarding herself. In a moment, she saw the excited and angry countenances of both her relatives; and holding the ornaments displayed in her hand she stood for a second, and then, apologizing for her intrusion, was about to withdraw, but her aunt called her back.

"Agnes," said she, "I give you credit for a great deal of good sense, and perhaps for some knowledge of the world—do you wish in reality to go with us this evening?"

"And why not, aunt?" said she.

"Why not?" repeated her aunt, with difficulty suppressing her passion. "Because, unless you had been specially invited, I consider your duty to be in attendance on your uncle."

"I don't want her attendance," said the old gentleman, angrily; and I say she shall go! Am I to be thwarted in this way? No; I tell you plainly that Agnes shall go, or else Ada shall stay too!"

Agnes' heart beat tumultuously, and she seemed hurled at once into the dust from the pinnacle of delight to which she had been unexpectedly raised.

"Agnes," said her aunt, almost fiercely, "are you going to be a firebrand amongst us?"

"Indeed I am not," returned Agnes, meekly, "at least not willingly; and to end the contest, of my own free will I prefer to remain at home. You and I, dearest uncle," said she, laying her hand on the back of his chair, "will have a quiet evening together." More she could not say; for her heart was very full.

"I know, Mrs. Colville," said the old gentleman, "that you think me a childish, fanciful old man, who must have somebody to look after him and amuse him; now, I am not this, and I tell you plainly that Agnes shall not be kept at home for my sake. I do not want her; I do not wish her to stay; I can take care of myself, and amuse myself. I dislike being treated like a child, Mrs. Colville."

Mrs. Colville, who had full reliance on Agnes' own pride and good sense, replied in a much more moderate and amiable tone than she had hitherto spoken in. "At our time of life, brother," she said, "it is not seemly for us to be disputing about trifles. I think I must have given evidence enough how much your dear children's interest is at my heart. If, however, you cannot trust our sweet Ada to me, you must find another chaperon for her. But that shall make no difference in my feelings towards her; and as to Agnes, I will leave it to herself."

She shall go to-night, if she likes, and I will be a good chaperon to her, and I will do all I can to get her introduced to partners and people; but if she knows anything of parties of this kind, she knows very well, that unless a girl have acquaintance in the room, or have great beauty or fortune to bring her into notice, she may sit the whole evening like a cipher in the room, and I know nothing more painful to witness than that, to say nothing of what the feeling of it must be."

Agnes thought to herself that the fact of her being the daughter of Mr. Frank Lawford would, in such society as she had any knowledge of, give her distinction enough; but, thus appealed to by her aunt, she replied that she should greatly prefer staying at home. Poor girl! she never had really felt till then how the spirit of pride and arrogance can set its foot upon a human heart, and crush it to the dust. She felt utterly humiliated; she longed to weep freely; to pour forth her outraged feelings into some tender, sympathizing bosom; but none was near her.

Mrs. Colville had gained her point. When did she fail of doing so?—and this being the case, she could even flatter.

"I must say, Agnes," she said, "that your dress is handsome and very becoming. I am sure you are greatly obliged to your uncle; and these," she said, taking up the jet rosary which hung in Agnes' hand, "these, too, are your uncle's present, I suppose!"

"I came to thank you for them, dear uncle," said Agnes, turning to him.

"I know nothing about them," returned he, petulantly. "They are not of my giving, and I wish I might not be bothered."

"Whose giving are they then," said Aunt Colville; "but we must see about it," and as if with the intention of doing so, she left the room.

"Go, Agnes," said her uncle, "I can do very well without you."

"Are you angry with me, then?" asked she, no longer able to suppress her emotions.

"No, I am not angry with you," said he, in a husky voice; "but I can do without you; not that I am angry with you, my poor girl," added he, seeing her weeping figure before him attired in that splendid dress, which so little accorded with her state of mind; "but I do not wish them to think that I am quite an idiot. Now, go!"

"Not until you have kissed me!" returned Agnes, feeling that she needed this token of reconciliation and kindness to keep her heart from breaking;

"Well, well," said her uncle, kissing her with real affection, "there is no need for us to quarrel. There, now don't spoil your good looks with crying. I wanted everybody to see to-night how lovely you were. I know they think you a plain girl; but you are not so!"

Agnes smiled at her uncle's compliment, and withdrew. She returned to her chamber, and took off the beautiful dress which, but a short time before, had filled her with such joy and gratitude. How differently it looked to her now! The charm and beauty were gone from it; and she felt acutely that, let even this dark time pass away, the sting of it would long remain. Anguish of heart and mortification seemed stitched into every fold, and it seemed to her as if she never could put it on again. Those ornaments, too—which the donor in doubt intended should give her pleasure—were the subject of unpleasant questioning and surmise. She enclosed them again in their case; and, throwing herself on her bed, wept bitterly.

## CHAPTER XII.

An hour or two afterwards, Agnes put on her bonnet and shawl, resolving, amid the quiet and healing spirit of vernal nature, to enter into calm communion with her own heart, and to take, if it were possible, more cheering and Christian views of the life around her. When she reached the dingle, where she had first seen poor Fanny



Jeffkins' child, her thoughts fixed themselves upon that subject; and seating herself upon the fallen tree, as she had done on that former occasion, she began to ponder upon the strange destiny which had linked her to this little friendless human being, and to discover, if she could, a gleam of light, which, amid the utter darkness which at present enveloped her, should point out the true path of her duty regarding it.

As she thus sat, her cousin Tom rode slowly up the little bridle path through the dingle. He looked unusually handsome and gay, and was lashing his riding-whip in the exuberance of animal spirits. He did not see Agnes; he had not the least expectation of meeting her there, and the leafy bushes concealed her as he passed; and, occupied by his own thoughts, which, whatever they might be, seemed happy ones, he never looked behind, and Agnes, with a flushing cheek and a suddenly-beating heart, watched him till he was out of sight.

It was a small incident; but at that moment it caused a great agitation in her feelings. "Almighty Father," prayed she, inwardly, "preserve my heart from sliding into any unworthy passion. Give me grace to know what is thy will, and ability to do it. Be thou my friend and comforter; for beside thee I have none!"

She rose up, and walked on in the direction opposite to that which her cousin had taken. She took the path which led to the sequestered woodland lane, and presently came to a little sylvan nook, where bubbled up a remarkably fine spring, which was said to possess medicinal virtues, and to which the country people came for water from a great distance. A little girl was filling a bottle as Agnes came up; she was stooping, and it was not until she rose that Agnes recognized her to be the girl from the caravan.

"Oh, miss," said the girl, her countenance suddenly lighting up, "I am so glad to see you. Mother is so badly, she cannot get up now, and I've come to this spring to fetch her some water; they say it is good for sick folks!"

"I have been to seek for you before," said Agnes; "but you were not in the lane."

"We've been out for a week," said the girl; "but mother's so bad again, and she would come back, for she says she shall die!"—The girl said no more for weeping, but trudged on with her bottle, wiping her eyes, as she went, with the corner of her ragged shawl.

"And how is the baby?" asked Agnes, cheerfully, walking quickly to keep up with the girl.

"Oh, miss!" replied she, and cried more than ever.

"Is the baby ill or dead?" asked Agnes, alarmed.

"No, no," said the girl; "but when mother's dead what's to become of us? Father does not love the baby; it makes him cross only to hear him laughing!"

"God will provide for him," said Agnes, trustfully; and, without another word, they walked onwards.

A strong-built man, with a surly, sunfreckled countenance, in a faded velveteen jacket, and leather leggings, was locking together the feet of a bony, ill-conditioned horse, which he seemed to have released from a smaller caravan as Agnes approached. A stiff and choleric-looking bull-terrier sprang, barking fiercely, to meet her as far as his chain would permit. At this the man turned round.

"The lady's come to see mother," said the girl timidly. The man touched his hat and muttered something, but whether in good or ill-will it was impossible to say. Agnes followed the girl up the steps of the caravan, hoping that her villainous-looking father would not join them. The dread of him, however, left her when she saw the pallid, and as it appeared to her, death-stricken countenance of the poor woman.

"The young lady's come to see you, mother," said the girl, bending down to the miserable bed on which she lay.

The woman opened her eyes and welcomed her visitor with a faint smile; at the same moment a lusty little form raised itself from under

the quilt, and the baby, roused out of a rosy slumber, looked around him with gravely wondering eyes. The man, in the meantime, had seated himself on the steps of the caravan, and began smoking from a short and very much discolored pipe.

"Shut the door, Mary," said the woman, "for the smoke is enough to poison one."

The girl shut the door, and, taking up the child, sat down with him on a three-legged stool. Her mother, however, bade her take him out, and Agnes and she were then alone together. She then raised herself in the bed; and fanning her now flushed face with an old handkerchief, thanked Agnes for thus visiting her. "I have thought a deal about you," said she, "and I don't know what it was that made me at once open my heart to you as I did."

"I wish to be your friend," said Agnes.

"God bless you!" returned the woman. "I am not long for this life; but there are some things which are very hard with me. I have made my husband promise that when I die, he will bury me in Lawford churchyard by my own father and mother. They were decent folks and have a gravestone of their own. It may not matter to me after I am gone, but it would make my end easier to know that I should lie near them; for that reason we came here. My husband hates Lawford and all the folks in it, and we've suffered sorely, sure enough, among them; but, for all that, I must be buried in Lawford churchyard. Another thing, however, is hard; he won't let me send for the clergyman, for it's old Colville's son who helped the squire to put him in jail, and brought all our troubles on us! But God help me! am I to die without the sacrament, or so much as a prayer read beside me! Oh, miss, I never thought to have died like a beggar in a ditch! And then there's the baby," continued she, as if her pent-up heart must vent all its troubles. "As I told you, it's rightly none of mine—God knows whose it is! But my husband conceits that it belongs to the Hall; and though as it were, we were paid to take it, he hates it because he hates all the Lawfords; and she that is to be my children's stepmother when I'm gone, will be the death of the child!"

Agnes thought of the surly-countenanced man, and his hatred to all the Lawfords, and a shudder ran through her; but of this she said nothing. "God will find friends for the child," she replied; "fear not, but put your trust in God, and He will provide friends for both!"

There was an earnestness and an assurance in her voice which fixed the woman's attention, and looking at her, she waited as if for further comfort.

"I can see," continued Agnes, the hand of God at work for you; only put your trust in Him; repine not, but believe Him to be your God and your Saviour. You have put confidence in me; put confidence then in Him, who may make me the humble instrument of His mercy to you."

"I said that you were an angel of God," returned the woman, "and I could not help opening my heart to you. Send me only some good man to pray by me—some good clergyman to administer the sacrament. But let it not be a Colville!"

Agnes thought, as she had done from the first, of poor Jeffkins. "I know a good man," said she, "but he is no clergyman, although, as a Methodist, he has preached up and down among the poor in country places. He has suffered much, and can sympathize with sorrow and misery."

"And where is he?" asked the woman eagerly.

Agnes said that he was in London.

"God help me!" returned the poor woman, in a tone of disappointment, "is there no good man nearer than London?"

"This is the man whom you must see; this is the man who will be both father and mother to the child when you are gone," said Agnes,

"only for the present, put confidence in God, and in me!"

"And who are you?" asked the woman; "and why do you thus care for me?"

"My name is of no consequence," returned Agnes, remembering the hatred which the woman's husband cherished to all who bore the name of Lawford; "believe only this, that God will send you comfort through me!"

With this Agnes, after promising to come again, if possible, took her leave; the man was gone from the steps of the caravan, but the ugly dog growled at her as if in the spirit of his master.

It was with quite different feelings that Agnes, on her return, thought of the great party at Merley Park, and of the mortification which she had endured only a few hours since regarding it. That part of her duty which had hitherto seemed to her dim and inexplicable now began to reveal itself clearly; she blessed God that His hand seemed thus unexpectedly leading her to Christian acts of love and service. All craving of her own personal indulgence was appeased; a light and cheerful spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to others infused new vigor into her mind, and made it easy to say, "Thy will be done."

The dinner, however, at the Hall was silent and constrained. The only one who seemed quite at his ease was Tom, who laughed and talked with more than his usual gayety. Ada who expected within so few hours to meet Mr. Latimer, was silent and thoughtful; so also was her father, who, though he had overcome his excitement of temper, and who knew, on reflection, that it was no use opposing his sister, yet thought it only right for the sake of his own dignity to keep up some show of resentment. Whilst Mrs. Colville, as was always the case on such occasions, attended to the proprieties of the table with the gravest of demeanors.

The ball-going part of the company went to dress.

"Where is Agnes?" asked Tom, as Ada, beautiful as human skill could make her, came into the drawing-room ready dressed.

Agnes at that moment entered, anxious to show her fair cousin that she could feel sympathy and interest in a pleasure of which she was not allowed to partake.

"Why are you not dressed, Agnes?" asked Tom.

"She stays with my father," said Ada. "It is most noble and unselfish of her," continued she; "and I wish, Tom, you could have seen how charming she looked in her new dress. I wish you were going, Agnes, I wish, indeed, from my soul that you were," said she, addressing her with such cordial enthusiasm of voice as she had never shown towards her before.

Agnes was taken by surprise, and the tears sprang to her eyes: "I cannot wish it now," said she; "indeed, dearest Ada, I cannot! These words of yours, this kindness of yours, which my disappointment has won me, are worth twenty balls!"

"It is very strange," said Tom, in a dissatisfied voice, "that my father cannot spare you for one evening only!"

At this moment Mrs. Colville entered dressed, and perfumed like a bed of gilliflowers, and as she came in, she said that the carriage was waiting. All three went down stairs. Agnes stood at the window, and saw them, in the clear moonlight of the summer evening, drive away. She watched the carriage till it was out of sight, and felt in the bottom of her heart a blank when she saw it no longer.

Her uncle had said in the morning, that he did not want her that evening. When, however, he sat alone in his little library, he felt as if he could not do without her. "Shall I send for her," thought he to himself, and as he thus was thinking, Agnes entered. He was evidently so glad to see her; laughed so merrily, and seemed so inclined to joke even about nothing at all, that spite of the morning, spite of the afternoon, spite of the little yielding of heart which had



come over her but a few minutes before, she could not help being infected by the old man's spirit. They were sitting opposite to each other, with the little tea-equipage between them, he uncle laughing till tears ran down his cheeks, at one of those amusing anecdotes which Agnes used to tell now and then for his entertainment, when the door was flung wide open, and with an air of the utmost importance, the footman announced "Mr. Latimer!"

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the old gentleman, rising from his chair, and seizing in both his the hand of this unexpected visitor; "who thought of seeing you, Mr. Latimer? Only think! all my family are just gone to Merley Park in expectation of meeting you! God bless me!" again exclaimed he, laughing, "this is a pretty joke!"

"I did not care about going to Merley Park," returned Mr. Latimer; "I preferred spending a quiet evening with you."

"Bravo!" shouted the old gentleman, flinging himself back into his chair—"but I forgot, Mr. Latimer," said he, again raising himself, "this is my niece, Miss Agnes Lawford. Poor Frank's daughter—you have heard of his death perhaps."

Latimer offered his hand to Agnes, and said that Mrs. Acton had mentioned her being there.

"Yes," said the old gentleman; "poor Frank has been dead these six or seven months—perhaps more."

Agnes glanced beseechingly at her uncle, for her father's death was a subject which it was painful for her to hear spoken of. She felt Latimer's eyes upon her, and blushed deeply, she knew not why.

Never was old Mr. Lawford so merry in all his life before. It amused him beyond measure, to think of Mrs. Colville, and his son and daughter being gone to Merley Park to meet Mr. Latimer, and here he was all the time! "Only think," said he, "they would not let poor Agnes go, although she had got new things, lest she should see you, most likely—and now here you are!"

Agnes was miserable, to hear her uncle talk thus. Mr. Latimer tried to turn the subject, but he would revert to it continually. "We shall have the laugh against them famously, Agnes," said he. "We'll tell them how well Mr. Latimer is looking, and all the rest. My word! but my old lady sister will be ready to swear from vexation, although she is Archdeacon Colville's widow."

Mr. Latimer at length sobered down the old gentleman, and made him listen to some grave details, relating to public affairs. While this is the case, we will briefly describe to our readers the exterior of the person, of whom so much has been said. In age Mr. Latimer might be five or six-and-thirty, and was about the middle height, well-made and proportioned. The countenance however, was a very striking one; as full of firmness and decision, as even John Colville's; but the effect on the beholder was very different. In Colville, the first thing which was seen was that strong, determined character, which conveyed with it the feeling of cool calculation, and an iron, but selfish will; yet while you wondered at the intellectual magnitude of the man you were not attracted by him. In Latimer, on the contrary, that extraordinary power and strength of character, which the countenance indicated, was so mellowed, so softened, nay, so almost glorified by a beaming expression of goodness and truth, that you were immediately attracted. You felt that the character, of which that countenance was the index, was one on which you might rely in life and death. You felt at once that a perfect gentleman, in the noblest meaning of the word, was before you; and yet there was at the same time, such a social, companionable charm and fascination in his manner, all was so perfectly natural and true, that occasionally you forgot even how very superior he was; you were drawn into his sphere, where truth and goodness were the native element, and then, it was only by the jarring effect of other persons' manners and sentiments that you found with how superior a nature you had been in communion.

Agnes, perhaps, of all human beings, was the one most capable of feeling and appreciating the value and beauty of such a character; her own idolized father had been such a one. She sat, as in a dream, and listened to his finely modulated voice; occasionally her eye met his, and there was a kindred expression in it, which touched her almost to tears. She wondered to herself, whether he had ever read her father's works; she passed them in review through her mind, and dwelt mentally upon the particular passages and trains of thought, which she would have liked to read to him or hear him read. She thought of Ada, and of the idea, which had always suggested itself to her mind, that this was the husband her family desired for her. She thought of Ada's cold, reserved, and haughty character, which, until this very evening, had evinced towards her so little kindness and sympathy. Ada's conduct to her was inexplicable; but then Mrs. Acton, that worthy sister of such a brother, had spoken of her with the warmest affection. Yes, there was no doubt of it, Ada would be his wife, his beautiful wife; and in spite of coldness and haughtiness, there was true womanly noble feeling in her soul, and, being there, would not a life-long companion like Latimer, foster it and call it forth in the most beautiful bloom as the sun calls forth the flowers of summer?

Such were the thoughts which passed through the mind of Agnes, whilst Mr. Latimer was explaining, at some length, a subject on which her uncle had asked for information. Agnes was roused from her reverie, and the thread of Latimer's explanation was broken suddenly by the very audible breathing of the old gentleman, who, buried in a corner of his easy chair, was fast asleep. Agnes and Latimer looked at each other and smiled.

"My uncle often sleeps in an evening," said she.

"He used to do so two years ago," returned Latimer, drawing his chair sufficiently near for them to talk without disturbing him. How it was, Agnes could really not tell, but, somehow or other, she found herself with tears on her cheeks, speaking of her father. They had been talking together for an hour. Latimer, did not seem to have said very much; he had not even told her, whether he had read her father's works, but she felt that he knew his character well and that he appreciated and loved him. It was the first time that she had ever talked thus freely of her father and her family, since her home had been among strangers. He had asked her particularly of her brothers, and she had told him of Arthur, with his manly beauty and his bold spirit, and of little Harry, who was timid and lovely as a girl. She had told him of her mother, so good and gentle, and of her excellent uncle in Scotland—all this she had told a stranger, within the first few hours of meeting him; and she might have gone on even farther, had not her uncle awoke, and apologizing for his little doze, again demanded, Mr. Latimer's attention. Agnes, now however thrown back on silence and herself, felt ashamed and troubled by what she had done; she thought of the impropriety of having talked so much; it all seemed folly and impertinence to her; she feared appearing ridiculous in his eyes, and that deep feeling which made her touchingly eloquent at the time seemed now to her like sentimental garrulity. What will he think of me? How foolish I must appear to him! thought she, and hardly ventured to raise her eyes. He too seemed silent and thoughtful.

Her uncle insisted on her telling Mr. Latimer that funny anecdote, at which he was laughing when he was first announced. Agnes prayed to be excused; she felt as if she could not tell it for the world, but her uncle declared that he would not excuse her, and then how like an angel Latimer seemed! he declared that he would have the privilege of telling droll anecdotes that night, and nobody should interfere with him. He told many most amusing stories, some of them about the negroes on his own plantation, and Mr. Lawford declared that he was much improved in story telling, and that Agnes was not to be named with him.

After this, Latimer rose to take his leave, nor could the old gentleman persuade him to stay until the ladies returned, although he promised that if he would, they would all go into the drawing-room, which was quite warm, and where was the piano, and Agnes should give him some of the finest music and songs that he had ever heard. But though Latimer declared that of all things he should like to hear Miss Agnes Lawford sing, yet he would not stay.

"He is a wayward, perverse fellow!" said the old gentleman when he was gone; "but bless my soul! what a laugh we shall have against Mrs. Colville and the others."

### CHAPTER XIII.

MR. LAWFORD had his laugh against his sister Colville the next day; but however annoyed that lady might in reality be, she had tact enough to let nothing of it be seen; and the old gentleman was not sure whether, after all, he had had a triumph or not, more particularly as Mr. Latimer himself made an especial call that morning on the ladies of the family, which appeared greatly to satisfy them, and which occurring whilst he was out in his bath chair, and Agnes was in her own chamber, neither one nor the other had any part in. Agnes was writing to Jeffkins; it was a difficult task to her, and while thus doing, very soon after Latimer had taken his departure, the door of the dressing-room, which divided her chamber from her cousin's, was suddenly opened, and Ada looking in, said in her occasionally abrupt manner, but with an expression of affectionate tenderness in her countenance, "May I come in? or rather," added she, again withdrawing, "will you come in here?"

Agnes, very much astonished, hastily put aside her writing, and entered the room, which was rather a boudoir than dressing-room. Ada seated herself on a sofa, before which stood a writing-table, and motioned to Agnes to do the same.

"No doubt, Agnes," she said, "my conduct at this moment appears very extraordinary; but I think I can make it intelligible to you. I know, at all events, that my coldness and reserve—the little sympathy and interest I for a long time felt towards you, must have wounded you, and must have given you a very unfavorable idea of my character; but I can explain the cause of this—I had strong prejudice against you."

"Against me?" interrupted Agnes.

"Yes; I believed myself to have been unkindly treated by you. Do not interrupt me," said she, hastily. "I shall in the end explain it all to you, and having resolved to do us both justice by this explanation, let me go on uninterruptedly."

"You shall," said Agnes.

"I met you," continued Ada, "with a strong prepossession in your disfavor—a strong resentment against you; and it is not now any merit in me to wish to reconcile us to each other, for I have been fairly conquered and won by your own goodness. I will not deny to you that I have striven not to like you; to see even sinister motives for your noblest conduct, but it availed not. There is an omnipotence in virtue which must conquer even the prejudice of wounded vanity and ambition. It has been your uniform unselfishness and gentleness, whilst you have been here; your willingness to bury, as it were, all your fine accomplishments, and gifts in my poor father's dreary room, that have made me willing to do you justice; but nothing, after all, touched me like your conduct of yesterday; before that every little lingering pride and unkindness in my heart gave way."

Agnes took her hand without speaking, and with her heart upon her lips, kissed it tenderly.

"And now," continued Ada, "for my confession." A mantling blush covered her beautiful face, and she paused for a moment, as if hardly knowing how to begin.

"And into your confession, dearest cousin," said Agnes, "of course Mr. Latimer comes."

"Yes," said Ada, as if determined no longer



to hesitate; "and as you have seen Latimer, you cannot wonder at it. Mr. Latimer has remotely and directly been the mainspring of my actions from the day when I first saw him. I was then a girl of twelve and he a young man of five-and-twenty; he was the admiration of my girlish heart. I went to school and even there cherished a romantic passion for him; had my bosom-friend, and to her confided the knowledge of a little amulet which I wore next my heart—two lines of his handwriting! Oh, how ridiculous it now seems," said she, smiling; "two lines of tender poetry which by chance had come into my possession. My amulet, or my own glowing fancy, created a very sentimental and romantic passion which was only increased by my own family and by circumstances, when at seventeen I returned home, and began my career as a young lady of some little pretensions in the world. Mr. Latimer was the friend of the family; the most welcome guest at the house, and more welcome to me than to any one else. Do not, however, Agnes, run away with the idea that the regard was all on my side; at this time, and even for two years, I believe he had a very sincere regard for me. To the astonishment, however, of all my family, Mr. Latimer never made any open declaration of love. Had he been other than himself, my family would long before have brought the affair to a conclusion one way or another; but he was not a man to be trifled with, nor one to be suspected of dishonorable trifling. I, however, knew, what my family did not, the true motives of his reluctance to avow himself. Great as was his regard, perhaps even his love for me, there were many faults in my character; much trifling, much female weakness; much wilfulness and vanity, which offended his high and pure notions of womanly worth, and which he could not tolerate in the woman whom he would make his wife. Ah, what grave lectures did he give me, when my family hoped that love was the theme of our discourse! and I, rebellious and unworthy creature that I was, profited nothing by them! I was piqued that he could not find charms enough in what the world called my beauty, to conceal all my follies and my shortcomings. I ran into excesses of vanity and coquetry, which gave me but little pleasure, on purpose to annoy him. Oh, Agnes," said she, with tears in her eyes, "what self-condemnation and sorrow did not this afterwards cause me!

"Mr. Latimer unlike all my family, was well acquainted with your father's writings. Politics and such subjects were rarely introduced in discussion between my family and him, because it was amicably understood that on these they tacitly differed; and my Aunt Colville wished for the match too devoutly to have the good understanding among them endangered by any controversy on politics or such subjects. To me, however, Mr. Latimer often spoke upon them; your father was his apostle; he quoted him, he read to me passages from his works, and kindled in my mind the utmost enthusiasm for him, although with a foolish perversity of heart, I never would confess the smallest admiration or even approval of his opinions. Of course he advocated the more solid education of women; he cared little, or seemed to care little, for my accomplishments, which every one beside praised so much, and yet I knew that he had taste for these things. His wife, he used to say, must be his friend and his companion, not his mere plaything. Such sentiments as these from the lips of the man I loved, awoke in me new views and a new ambition, although a sort of wayward pride prevented me from confessing as much. Just at that time I had a new lover, a fashionable man of the world, who offered to all my outward attractions that incense of which Mr. Latimer was so sparing. I had not the slightest regard for him; but in the vain wish of piquing Mr. Latimer, I coquetted with him tremendously. My Aunt Colville never was so angry with me in all her life before. It is now two years since; and, in the midst of this flirtation, Mr. Latimer announced his intention of leaving England for two years. It was to me like the shock of an earthquake, and sobered me directly. We met but twice afterwards; once at a large dinner party, when it seemed to me that he shunned me; and never shall I forget his quiet and almost dejected expression of countenance—it spoke volumes to my heart; and the other, the evening before he sailed, at our own house; and, when at parting, he expressed his expectation of finding me married on his return. But for his sake, also, my family have not urged my marriage with any of my numerous lovers.

"When Mr. Latimer was gone," continued Ada, "I had time to ponder upon all his teachings; and the better part of my nature, which he had aroused, and had done all in his power to foster, made his voice be heard. I resolved, during his absence, to make myself worthy of him; to surprise him on his return by my improved character and my matured mind. I had only to wish, and my partial friends gratified all my desires; besides which they had some little compassion for me, I believe, thinking that I must suffer from Mr. Latimer's coldness or desertion. Pleasure tours were therefore made, and all possible things were done to divert my mind. To their surprise, however, they found that I neither pined nor was sad; the truth was, that I was well pleased with his absence, because in it there was a stimulus to improvement. I had now an object to attain, and for that I strove ardently. I had this little room fitted up as my boudoir, with a good lock on the door to secure me from intrusion; and here—it is almost laughable to think of it—I sat down to study deep things; to mature my understanding; to gain knowledge, that I might be worthy of him, might prove to him on his return how sincere were all my endeavors, even if I did not greatly succeed.

"Mr. Latimer had a high opinion of my powers of mind; at least, so he always said; and he was so entirely authority with me that I was convinced that my efforts at self-improvement would succeed. And now, dear Agnes," said she, "what do you suppose were the first books which I read? They were the works of my uncle! yes, those works which my family dreaded, and which Mr. Latimer admired so much! You would smile were I to tell you the little artifice I had recourse to, to get possession of them, but I succeeded; and here they are," said she, opening a deep drawer in her table, "and their worn state will convince you of the use I made of them. I established the system of locking my room; it was my humor, and no one objected. From the time of my acquaintance with these glorious works a new life dawned upon me. I began to see things, as it were, from a truer point of view, and they assumed new positions and a new relative value. Never shall I forget that time—that breaking in of a new light—the light of truth! My veneration for my uncle was unbounded, but I kept it all to myself; a new bond seemed mysteriously to be woven between Mr. Latimer and myself. I was supremely happy. Every one complimented me on my improved looks—it was the intelligence of mind in my countenance that improved it. I was no longer impatient now for Mr. Latimer's return; I seemed to have yet so much to do before he came!

"My Aunt Colville has told you," continued she, after a short pause, "that I also am a genius—in authoress!—God help me! so I wished to be. I had a little talent in poetry. As a child, and at school even, I had written; my family thought highly of my productions, and even Mr. Latimer, to whom they had been shown, had not disdained to praise them. Poetry was my delight; poetry of a high order—Shelley, and Byron, and Coleridge, and Wordsworth, and Campbell, and Milton, and Shakspeare—they were my text-books. There they are," said she, turning her beaming countenance towards her handsome book-case, where the most expensive editions of these poets shone in rich bindings and gold. "There they are, the immortal seven, whom I, poor aspiring worm, tried to emulate! I wrote, and a daring, and yet, perhaps, after all, a wise idea took possession of my mind. I copied out most carefully and most elaborately, on hot-pressed paper, and in a handsome book, such poems as I considered my master-pieces—and the book was full."

With these words she paused, and opening her desk, took out a handsome album-like volume, which instantly seemed strangely familiar to Agnes' eyes.

"Of all men in England," continued Ada, "I longed for the approbation and encouragement of your father. I wrote therefore to him a letter, which I meant to be modest and humble, and which, I intended, should recommend myself to him. I think it possible, however, that it was full of self-love and presumption. I concealed my name, avowed my aspirations after distinction, and besought his advice and encouragement, requesting him to read my volume, and give me his opinion thereon. With the most unspeakable impatience I longed for his reply. I counted the days till it should come. I had no doubt but that he would praise my efforts and request my name. I thought with pride of making myself known to him. I arranged the letter I would write. I would confess to him my ardent wish for improvement—I would make of him my moral and intellectual father—I would sit at his feet and learn! Never, Agnes, had I been so proud of my beauty, even when I wished most to captivate the proud heart of Mr. Latimer, as when I thought of sending to your father my miniature—that he might see and love his spiritual daughter. I thought of the purses I would net for him—of the slippers I would work for him, of the birthday and Christmas presents I would send him!—Ah, Agnes, I know how it was; I wanted incense to be offered to my vanity, and how little was I prepared for the answer that was returned!"

Agnes sat with her head bowed down, and her heart transpierced with the keenest sympathy: her feelings were intense agony; but she said nothing, and Ada continued:

"My hot-pressed and handsomely bound volume, and my delicately copied verses, came back, and with them these cold words, in answer to my long and warm epistle.—She took a note from between the leaves of the book, and read:

"Much as my time is necessarily occupied I have gone through your verses. You ask my advice, it is, in a few words, this.—Read more, and write less; or rather, write not at all.

"I employ an amanuensis to write, but remain, dear madam

"Yours faithfully,

"FRANK LAWTON."

"I remember it! ah, I remember it!" exclaimed Agnes, in deepest pity for the poor girl. "Alas! that ever seemingly unkind words were written to you. But, dearest Ada, my father had so delicate a sense of excellence as made him seem severe, perhaps; but he was not less severe to himself."

With an air of painful abstraction, Ada glanced again at the note, and then, folding it together, kept it in her hand, and continued, "The words of this note entered my heart like an icy dagger. I had fancied such a different answer; my enthusiastic admiration of all that was good and great deserved it. I longed for love and encouragement; I met with coldness and repulsion!"

"For one moment consider, dearest Ada," said Agnes, anxious above all things to justify her father's conduct, which she knew had been wise, "that he was continually applied to by young, unknown aspirants, who wished to be encouraged in a path where he knew that failure and mortification only awaited them. My father knew what the world needs from its authors, and he knew also that to the young writer, the first mortification, the first disappointment, even though the unpleasant task was imposed upon him, who was in truth

nothing but kindness and love, might save the author from far worse, far more bitter disappointment afterwards."

"It may be so; no doubt it is," returned Ada, again speaking in her cold and haughty tone; "but the letter which I so ardently had wished for, made me doubt if my golden idol were not clay—made me doubt in the truth of noble sentiments, and that divine enthusiasm for virtue which had been kindled in my soul by your father's pen. No, Agnes, say what you will, it was a cold, unfeeling letter—just, it might be; I am come now to believe that it was so; but the effect on my mind at the time, was painful and injurious. Could we only have more faith in the good that is in every one, how much more kindly should we act,—how much suffering should we spare each other! How much unkindness and wrong is often thus done to young, generous, and aspiring hearts!"

"Oh, how true is every word you say!" returned Agnes, feeling her heart wrung with the deepest sorrow for the pain which had thus been inflicted, and yet knowing so truly what were the motives of her father's conduct in such cases: "And how much my father would have loved you had he known you! had those writings you sent only faithfully portrayed your mind! had he only seen some revelation of the nobler qualities within you; for, of all men, he had the truest and quickest appreciation of nobility of character."

"So I believe," said Ada; "and for that reason, when I first became aware that there was within my soul a well-spring of better and higher action, did I so much covet his counsel and his support. But Agnes," said she, speaking now in a kinder voice, and relaxing from her cold attitude, "I must confess to you that this letter produced on my mind the worst possible effect. It mortified my vanity, it dethroned also my ideal divinity. Those sentiments in his pages, which I before had read with a kindling soul, and which had served as an inspiration to every nobler wish, now seemed to me like tinsel or mere sound. My heart no longer glowed towards the writer. I felt that I had been unkindly treated by him; my enthusiastic love had been repelled—or, more truly, I suppose," said she, smiling, and with tears in her eyes, "he would have said that my vanity was wounded."

Agnes thought, as she had often done amid her experience of literary life, how painful it was, and how pitiable, when a young, glowing, enthusiastic mind, without, however, adequate powers, is possessed with a rage for composition, and when the love for poetry is mistaken for its inspiration. She knew many a humiliating history of this kind; and now her heart bled for the suffering which she saw that it had again caused. But she made no remark of this nature. That, indeed, was not the time for it. She was silent; but her eyes spoke the tenderest affection.

After a pause, Ada continued: "Soon after this, the news came of the sudden death of your father. To me, it was a far greater shock than to the rest of the family. And then your letter came—my father wept as he read it. The letter had to me, however, an interest and an intelligence which nobody else could feel; it was written by the daughter of him who had been so much to me. The letter was praised for its fine style, and natural and simple expression. I studied it line by line. I thought what would have been the letter I should have written on the death of such a father. I believed that it might have been like yours, for I saw plainly that your father was all to you which he had been ideally to me. I, too, wept as I read it. But the letter was important to me in another way. I saw by it that you it was who had been your father's amanuensis. You had written the letter which had wounded me so bitterly. Although it bore your father's signature, for aught I knew the severe judgment might be your own. My brother went to the funeral, and I was impatient to hear his report of you. But Tom is reserved, and has no talent for description; so all I heard was, that your grief for your father was excessive, and that you were not handsome. I tell you his very words, Agnes," said she, smiling, and your womanly vanity may perhaps be wounded; but, as a palliative, however, I will tell you that most of us disagree with Tom, and I am not sure whether by this time he, too, has not altered his opinion. But, to return to the time when he did not know you. Tom's report only confirmed the desire of my family to offer you a home with us. Of course, I was not consulted about your coming here; and if I had, I perhaps should not have opposed it under existing circumstances; and yet I must confess to you that my feelings towards you were anything but friendly. You had written that painful letter to me—you therefore knew that a young and an aspiring heart—a heart filled with almost bigoted devotion to your father—had been repulsed and wounded: for aught I knew, you might have added poignancy to the sting. You, it is true, did not know that I was the poor poetess who had presumed to lay the little offering, my only one, at his feet; but I knew it, and I knew that it was your hand that had flung it back! God forgive me, but my resentment was strong! and this must account to you for, and, if I can, excuse my coldness and my distance towards you for so long."

"Forgive me! oh, forgive me!" exclaimed Agnes, with deep emotion. "I acknowledge how little you deserved any severity from us; I acknowledge how noble is this candor on your part."

"It was not, however," continued Ada, "I who first did you justice—it was my brother. It was he who first acknowledged your devotion to my father; your gentleness, and your unselfishness; your willingness to bury, as it were, all your fine powers of mind and beautiful gifts in the cheerless room of a tatty invalid, to whom you owed no duty. It was Tom who first became conscious of this; and when I began really to see how excellent you were, how truly you carried out into daily practice all that refined and elevated philosophy



phy which your father taught in his pages. I saw in you an emanation of his spirit. I saw in you a realization of that after which I had striven, and I began to think humbly of myself—I began to covet your esteem, and next to determine to win it. This, then, is the truth—are we not henceforth friends?"

Agnes fell on the neck of her cousin, and wept. "Oh, Ada!" said she, "this generous candor on your part is far nobler than the power to write smooth verses—is far nobler than merely the highest intellect!"

"That may be," returned Ada, "but I had literary ambition—that, however, has been humbled; I will now try to do well, and to deserve that affection without which my life would be a blank!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

THIS revelation of ingenious and beautiful character, captivating even in its weakness, diffused a sunshine over the soul of Agnes. A new life seemed to have begun for her at Lawford; and thankful to God for having permitted hearts which had hitherto seemed closed against her, to unfold themselves in affection and beauty, and thankful too, in any way to be an agent of God's providence, she wrote to poor Jeffkins. She communicated to him the melancholy interview with his daughter, and the charge which that unhappy girl had laid upon her. The child, she told him, was found. She described to him briefly the character of the people in whose hands it was, the illness of the woman who had hitherto been a mother to it, and her desire for a spiritual comforter. She now conjured him, by the regard which he had felt towards her father, by his love to his fellow-sufferers, and by the kindness which this woman had shown to a friendless child, to come and bless a dying spirit; and, as death was about to take from the child the protector which God had hitherto provided, she appealed to every tender sentiment in his soul, and prayed him, for the sake of the bitter and soul-purifying anguish which his unhappy daughter had passed through, not to close his heart against her innocent, living representative. The letter was like the voice of a pitying angel pleading for fallen humanity; and the letter, had it even been written by a pen less eloquent and less heart-inspired than that of Frank Lawford's daughter, would not have failed of its effect. The pride of unforgiving and un pitying manhood had passed away from the soul of poor Jeffkins. The dead form of his unfortunate daughter had obtained full pardon for all her living sins, and this, at the same time, had also produced a great change outwardly upon him. His iron-gray hair was become thin and silvery; his strong frame was bowed, as if with the weight of many years; and if somewhat of his natural harshness of countenance remained, it was so impressed by the baptism of sorrow which had passed over him, as to touch every beholder with pity and sympathy. His mode of life also had undergone a great change. He had withdrawn from all his former associates; he made speeches no longer at political clubs and debating societies; he passed no hard judgments on men or on women; a quiet, subdued, introverted spirit marked his whole demeanor. No one had seen him smile from the day on which his daughter's body was found. The widowed mother of his young apprentice, Johnny, was the only person who entered his house; she acted as his housekeeper, but was not its inmate. For weeks sometimes, he never had exchanged a word with her, and yet he was not sullen. He would sit for hours looking at the little chair which had been Fanny's when a child, and which stood opposite to his own; and some few things of hers, mere trifles which she had left behind her—a little silk handkerchief for the neck, a silver thimble, and a red morocco pocket book—were to him like sainted relics. Many people remarked, that he never used now his handsome pocket Bible, with gilt edges and silver clasps, but instead of it carried with him a little shabby one, which had one side of its binding sewed on with black thread; but they who wondered knew not that this had been used by her at school and at church, in her brightest and happiest days, before she went to Lawford.

Jeffkins bathed the letter which Agnes wrote to him with tears, and long before he had read it through, he had resolved upon the journey. He set his house in order with what speed he might, placed his young apprentice in the hands of a respectable and trustworthy man of his own trade, and requesting his mother to have a general oversight of his small possessions, left the door-key with her, and taking a change of raiment with him, set out for Leicester.

Not many evenings after Agnes had written her letter to Jeffkins, the Reverend Sam Colville came in. Every one saw in a moment that some important business had brought him there, and he lost but little time in announcing it. Some of his parishioners had brought him word that a poor woman, the wife of a traveling peddler, or something of that kind, lay ill in the caravan in Woodbury Lane, and wished him to go and visit her. Nobody, he said, told him who it was, and so when he was at leisure he went. He said that Flora, his favorite pointer, was with him, and that when he got within reach of the caravan, a great ugly bull-terrier rushed upon her and would have worried her to death. He would have killed any man, he said, who had attacked his dog, and therefore he fell on the terrier with all his might. At that moment the door of the caravan opened, and out came a fellow with a villainous countenance, who in a moment he saw to be the master of the dog. "What do you keep such brutes as this loose for?" exclaimed he; "call off your dog, or I'll beat his brains out."

"Keep your stick off my dog!" said the man, insolently, desending to where Colville stood. "And who do you think the fellow was?" asked he, from Mr. Lawford and his family. "It was that poaching fellow, Marchmont?"

"Oh, the wretch!" exclaimed Mrs. Colville.

"He's a villainous looking fellow," continued Mr. Sam Colville, "and he doubled up his fists, although he did not raise them, and swore a tremendous oath, that he would see me at the devil before I should hurt his dog!"

"Is this the language you use to a clergyman?" said I. "I tell you what, fellow," said I, "I'll have you put on the treadmill for twelve months!" and with that he began abusing me—said he hated clergymen worse than the devil; that we were all hypocrites together, and that he would not give a fig's end for a bushel of my prayers!"

"Dreadful!" said Mrs. Colville.

"It is insufferable," said Mr. Lawford.

"These are your radicals, your democrats!" said Mrs. Colville, glancing at Agnes, who took the greatest possible interest in the whole history; "and if such wretches as these are to be at large," continued she, "we shall be no better off than they are in Ireland!"

"That fellow would commit murder as soon as look at you," continued Mr. Sam; "and he as good as threatened it. I told him I would have him summoned, and his license taken from him, and give him that which he should remember the longest day he lived; and with that he bade me do my worst; called me tyrant, and bloodsucker, and said that all the seed, breed, and generations of Lawfords and Colvilles were alike; and actually bade me to go about my business; for that if I stayed much longer, he would not be answerable for the consequences. 'I am but flesh and blood,' said he, 'and there's a long unsettled account between us yet!' said he; and with that, trembling literally with rage from head to foot, and as white as a corpse, he whistled off his ugly dog, and turned into his caravan, and shut the door in my face."

"It is a thousand pities but the fellow had been transported at once," said old Mr. Lawford; "but I think it's a pity, Sam, that you got into any brawl with him."

"I'll have a summons for him," said Sam. "I consider my life in danger from him," said he; "and if you object to drawing me out a summons, I'll go at once to Mr. Latimer."

"I would rather not prosecute the fellow any more," said Mr. Lawford, "and that I candidly tell you."

"Let it drop, Sam," said Tom Lawford, now speaking for the first time; "we all know how warm you are. The fellow is a hardened brute, we all know, and yet he has been living decently and quietly of late—and you have no witnesses."

"Bless me," said Sam, warmly, "my character against a fellow like that, is as good as ten witnesses, before any bench."

"You'll do no good," continued Tom, "you'll only make the fellow ten times your enemy. You recollect how it was with that Timothy Randal; and really, Sam, it is not creditable to a clergyman to be always prosecuting his parishioners: now take my advice, and let the matter die away quietly."

All the family felt that this was good advice, even Mrs. Colville; and yet the natural prejudice which she had against the poor, suggested to her a new idea with regard to Marchmont.

"I wonder," said she, "where that money came from that seemed to give him a start in the world, as it were? Perhaps he murdered somebody for the money! It always was a very mysterious thing to me."

"That has nothing to do with the present question," said Tom.

"I think it has," interrupted his father. "He comes out of jail; his wife and family out of the workhouse; and then in a month or so he is seen up and down in the country with a peddler's caravan. These things do not come out of nothing; and, as Sam says, he is a brutal fellow, likely enough to commit murder."

"I declare to you," remarked Mr. Sam, "that though I am neither physically nor morally wanting in courage, yet that is a fellow who would make me fear for my life, and I'll have him looked after pretty handily!"

"Don't tell me, Sam," said Tom, with a persuasive smile on his lips, "that you really were afraid of him! You are not the man to let a fellow like that frighten you! and, as to what he said about not valuing your prayers, perhaps, if your own parishioners spoke out, you would find the opinion not such a very rare one!"

"Tom," exclaimed his aunt, horrified at such free speaking, are you really taking the part of such vagabonds against a gentleman and a clergyman?"

The discussion after this grew still warmer, and then Ada came forward as the advocate of peace, of forbearance, on the plea of his poor wife's former good character, and that proof of her benevolence and strong affection in adopting the poor foundling child. The end of it all was, that Mr. Sam was to take counsel with Mr. Latimer, whose character as a just and wise magistrate had always stood so high.

The next day Mr. Latimer dined with the Lawfords—next a family dinner—for Mrs. Colville was determined, as soon as possible, to make this gentleman feel at home among them. It was a very pleasant dinner, and the subject which soon engrossed the whole party, was the affair of Marchmont and Mr. Sam Colville. Mr. Latimer had dissuaded him from taking any violent measures against the man; and he now told them that, probably, in consequence of the threats of Mr. Sam, Marchmont had removed his caravan out of Woodbury Lane. This lane was a short cut to Lawford, from the turnpike road, leading to the Hays, and Mr. Latimer had ridden up it in coming there that day. It was his idea, however, that he was not gone far off, for he had that very morning seen a green caravan on the little common at the back of his own park. It was the first time that he had seen a caravan there, and he had no doubt but that it was Marchmont's.

Mrs. Colville hoped that Mr. Latimer's poultry-yard would not suffer.

Tom again said something in palliation of the man's

conduct; and Ada related to Mr. Latimer the history of the child which the poor wife had adopted.

Mr. Latimer's noble countenance beamed with delight as he listened to this relation, which Ada made with enthusiasm, because she saw that he approved both it and her.

"I know," said Agnes, venturing a remark for the first time on the subject, "that instances of noble, disinterested benevolence, of self-sacrifice and devotion, are not so very rare among the poor. The charity and kindness of this class one to another are enough to make the rich and the so-called charitable blush. I believe, if I may so express it, that were it not for the poor, in many cases the poor must perish."

"I do not approve of any sanctioning of crime," said Aunt Colville.

Ada, and Tom, and Mr. Latimer, all seemed eager to testify that Agnes did not sanction any crime, but merely asserted the existence of benevolence and virtue among the poor.

"I firmly believe in its existence myself," said Mr. Latimer, "even among the criminal poor."

This conversation gradually died away, and a gayer succeeded. The dessert was on the table, all were gay and unanimous. The setting sun shone into the side windows of the room, and drew attention to its beautiful coloring; and from the laurels of the shrubbery the mellow tones of rival throats came audibly.

"How charming a walk would be!" exclaimed Ada.

Agnes looked at her uncle as if for consent.

"Why do you always look at me, child?" asked he, laughing, and then turning to the others, he said: "Agnes would make you believe me to be a great tyrant! Yes, yes, go out with them by all means," said he, seeing that his son, and daughter, and Mr. Latimer waited for her to accompany them.

The young people passed the window, and Agnes nodded to him as she passed. "She is a sweet creature," said her uncle, as if thinking to himself, "I wonder what I should do without her now."

They walked on, all four together, towards the setting sun, and in the direction of the dingles of the bottom of the park. At length Mr. Latimer gave his arm to Ada, and Tom of course offered his to Agnes. It was the first time in her whole life that she had thus walked with him. A consciousness which was almost painful to her, made this little circumstance more noticeable. The thought of Fanny Jeffkins and her child, accompanied her as they went on through that very dingle where she had first seen it, and following in the wake of the other couple, they sauntered slowly up Woodbury Lane. The lane was empty; scattered straw and rags, and the trampled grass, showed where the caravan had stood. Had Agnes not been so much interested in its inmates, or had not known that her companion was so also, she would naturally enough have spoken on the subject; but she did not. The place, however, seemed to suggest the thought to her cousin, for he said: "You have seen perhaps the influence you have had upon me, Agnes. I have adopted your benevolent opinions and views. They wanted to put that poor Marchmont again in jail, but as you once said, 'the best way of reforming the world is to make it love goodness.' You have reformed me in this way."

"Nay," said Agnes, anxious to disclaim any power, even for good, over her cousin, and suspecting also that the true motives for his forbearance towards the man, proceeded from the obligation he was under to him regarding the child, "there are good and benevolent feelings in your own heart naturally."

"I am glad you think so," returned he, "cherish that idea, Agnes; cherish every idea which makes you think better of me; and in the meantime, I will earnestly endeavor really to deserve your esteem."

Tom spoke in that soft persuasive voice which once before had stolen into Agnes' heart. "It is the voice of the tempter," thought she, and trembled.

They were now at a turn of the lane where the Merley brook crossed it. Tall, leafy willows sprang up beside it, and cast a shade over the road, and the little bridge with its low parapeted wall, on which, in the soft twilight, they found the other young couple seated.

"How sweet it is!" said Ada, motioning to her cousin to seat herself by them.

She and her companion sat down. They began to talk about beautiful evenings, and of fine descriptions of them, and the soft lilac-hued summer twilight, as given by poets and romance writers.

"The most beautiful one I know," said Mr. Latimer, addressing Agnes, "and one which I never fail to think of, when I witness the pale sunset about Lawford, is one which I am sure, is familiar to you also; and he quoted a short and most eloquent passage, descriptive of the scene and hour, from Mr. Frank Lawford's work entitled "The Poet."

Agnes' heart thrilled to hear her father's beautiful words spoken with so much feeling, and her countenance expressed her emotions.

"That work," she said, "is full of the spirit of the landscape round Lawford. I never thoroughly felt its exquisite and truthful descriptions until I knew this neighborhood."

Ada was almost as well acquainted with this book as Latimer himself, but she said nothing. Latimer imagined Agnes to be the only one who could sympathize with him in his admiration of his favorite author. Agnes saw, from this little circumstance, that he was ignorant of Ada's noble labors during his absence. Entire, open-hearted confidence did not yet exist between them. She wished that she could be the means of bringing it about, but she had given her promise to Ada to reveal nothing. She feared, too, that her cousin might be wounded by the enthusiasm of his manner to her, and this idea was painfully confirmed by Adarising, and coldly proposing that they should return.

They walked again, as they had done at first, all four together, and then, having repassed the place where the caravan had stood, and after Latimer had approved



of Tom's resolution of not harshly attempting Marchmont's reformation by again sending him to jail, even to please the rector, they separated, and Tom and Agnes found themselves considerably in the rear of the others.

It seemed to be Tom's wish to delay their return as long as possible, and yet he was by no means in a talkative mood; and while he persisted in quietly sauntering along, on the plea of looking for glow-worms, Agnes fell into a train of thought very natural indeed. She had not yet heard anything from Jeffkins. She had directed him to the woman in the caravan, in this very lane, and now the caravan was gone. To inquire after it in the neighborhood seemed to her a very natural thing; would it not be equally so to him? Still she was quite anxious on the subject; and how, at several miles distance, was she herself to see the woman? Whilst she was thus pondering, a dark figure was seen advancing up the lane in the now deepening twilight, which was rendered still more obscure from the thickly over-hanging trees.

The figure advanced slowly, and then revealed itself to be that of an elderly man with a child in his arms. Some villager, thought Agnes, who, after his day's work was done, had gone forth into the summer evening with his favorite child or grandchild.

"Pray, sir, am I in the right road for Merley Common?" asked the man, suddenly stopping them.

Agnes' heart seemed to stand still, and then throbbed violently as she at once recognized the voice of her humble friend, about whom she had, even at that moment, been anxious. At once two questions were settled; he had found the woman, and he had taken the child to his bosom! "Thank God! Thank God!" ejaculated Agnes in spirit, feeling that the first fruits of her labors of love were before her.

"Who are you?" asked Tom abruptly, in reply to the man's question; wondering who should be there, and yet know so little about the neighborhood.

"I am a stranger in these parts, sir," said the man, "and will thank you to put me in the right way if I am wrong."

Tom Lawford, little imagining his own connection with the two beings before him, gave the information which was demanded.

"I wonder what he is doing here, and where he comes from?" remarked Tom, looking after him with that inquisitive feeling which dwellers in country places, even wealthy ones, have toward strangers.

Agnes walked on with a rejoicing spirit, clearly comprehending the cause of Jeffkins being in this place. No doubt he had learned, from the little girl, of her frequent visits to the dingle where they had first met, and where he now most likely had been, in the hope of seeing her. And how were they to meet? how could she get a note, or message conveyed to him? The wild thought of enlisting Mr. Latimer in her cause crossed her mind, but only came to show its own wildness and impossibility.

Spite of all these little difficulties, however, Agnes felt very happy. Thank God! was the inward voice of her heart. Her cousin was charmed with her cheerfulness; she was now quite disposed to hunt for glow-worms with him.

"It has been a charming walk!" said Tom as they approached the Hall.

"It has indeed!" returned Agnes.

#### CHAPTER XV.

THE next day there was to be a large party at the rectory. It was a party invited to meet Mr. Latimer, and consisted of all their friends and immediate neighbors. The whole family at the Hall, including Agnes, were invited, and all were to go, with the exception of the old gentleman, who for some years had very rarely dined from home.

Agnes thought that even after all the vexation and mortification of that former occasion, she was in spirits to put on her beautiful new dress. Ada, into whose heart the desire had been sliding for some time, that Agnes should be the wife of her brother, besought her to put on also the elegant jet ornaments.

"If I only knew from whom they came!" said Agnes.

"Do not be prudish," returned Ada, laughing, "they were sent perhaps by some of your London friends, or by your uncle in Scotland."

Agnes shook her head.

Ada made the wearing of these ornaments a matter of much consequence. "She would regard it," she said, "as a personal favor to herself, and she would take it unkind if Agnes refused it to her." The truth was, that Ada was acting by the wishes of her brother. He had made a little secret compact with himself that her wearing or not wearing these ornaments, at Mr. Sam's party, should be an omen of the success of his love for her.

"Do not make such a trifle as this, any evidence of my affection for you," prayed Agnes, who, believing that the ornaments were Tom's gift, felt a scruple in accepting them, still more in wearing them; "I will show my affection for you in much more important things."

"Ah!" said Ada, with a deep sigh, "our happiness is more influenced by trifles than people think; there are many trifles which wring our very hearts!"

There was a deep earnestness in her words, and an evidence of emotion in her voice, which surprised Agnes; and with those words she left the room. The truth was, that several little circumstances—mere trifles—had troubled her during the foregoing evening. She could not disguise from herself that there was no longer the same devotion of feeling in Mr. Latimer's heart towards her, that there had been formerly. He treated her with friendly courtesy but nothing more; nor had she found, eagerly as she longed for it, an opportunity of telling him of that which had occupied her during his absence. There was wanting

between them that mutual power of attraction which, with an influence mysterious and irresistible as life itself, draws together kindred hearts. Ada felt that they were separated; she tried to believe that the difference was in herself; but a mere trifle, a word, a manner which could not be described, but *must* be felt, told her that her influence over him was weakened; still, the frequency of his visits to Lawford, the reluctance he seemed to have in leaving them, looked like the devotion of a lover—these were the counterbalancing trifles. And Ada, as our every-day life convinces us, was not wrong when she said that our happiness was influenced by trifles. The merest feather shows us which way the wind blows.

After breakfast two events occurred which had reference to Agnes. In the first place, a note was brought for her to the back-gate. A little girl brought it, and had given it to a groom, with the request that it might be delivered immediately. This note was fortunately conveyed at once to Agnes in her own chamber. She recognized the handwriting instantly to be that of Jeffkins; the note consisted of but a few words, and was an urgent request that she would see him in the dingle at the bottom of the park, at four o'clock that afternoon. There was no means of sending him any answer back, nor did one seem to be expected; but here presented itself a difficulty; how was it possible that she could be with him at the dingle, nearly a mile from the Hall, at four o'clock, for perhaps a long, and at all events a painful interview, and yet be back again in time to dress and go to the rectory for dinner at six? It was impossible! She turned it over all ways in her mind, and nothing but perplexity came out of it. In the midst of this she was summoned down stairs to see Mrs. Sam, who wished to speak with her. But in the first place, we must say that this lady and Mrs. Colville also, like Ada, were not quite satisfied with Mr. Latimer; they thought, and yet were very reluctant to acknowledge it, that his eye dwelt rather more upon Agnes than upon her cousin; and for this (people are so very unreasonable sometimes!) they blamed Agnes. She tried to attract his attention, they said, and for that reason she must not go to dinner to Mrs. Sam's.

But we will now see what that lady has to say for herself; she and her aunt Colville were together in the little library where Agnes was desired to come. Agnes dreaded that some awful business was in hand; she thought that it must have reference to Jeffkins, and her acquaintance with the people of the caravan; and she went down, not knowing how she could clear herself, where so much had to be concealed. But they were not frowning faces that met her; and, on the contrary, they looked quite smiling and deprecating. Mrs. Sam began by an apology; she really did not know, she said, how to make her peace with Agnes, but she had some way miscalculated her guests; her table would only accommodate a certain number, and she had one lady too many.

"I will stay at home," said Agnes, with such a cheerful and relieved countenance as instantly made both ladies surmise that she had never wished to go, and that was strange and ungrateful in her, they thought.

Mrs. Sam said more than was necessary about her regret at this untoward circumstance, and her hope that Agnes would come in after dinner for tea.

"Agnes and I will have tea together!" said her good old uncle, remembering how amusing Agnes could be when they two were alone together in an evening.

"Yes," said Agnes, "we will have a pleasant evening together."

Mrs. Sam urged that Agnes should come in, if it were only towards ten o'clock.

"Perhaps I can go to bed a little earlier," said the old gentleman, "and set her at liberty for the evening. Your guests will not leave so very early; Sampson can walk over with her, and perhaps you will have a little dance; I dare say Agnes likes dancing."

"Yes," said Mrs. Sam, "and perhaps you would not object, Agnes, to play a quadrille or two if it should be so."

"Certainly not," remarked Aunt Colville. "I am sure that she would be quite glad to gratify you."

"Perhaps," said Agnes, thinking that probably after her interview with Jeffkins she might be in no humor either for playing or dancing, "you may not need me—perhaps you would excuse me altogether."

"I think it will amuse you," returned Mrs. Sam.

"I think you will not refuse Mrs. Sam so small a request," said Mrs. Colville.

"She shall do just as she likes," interrupted the old gentleman; "if at the time she incline to go, she shall go; if not, she shall stay away, and nobody shall be offended!"

The servant came in with letters—important letters—letters from Edward in India. The wife and family of his friend Colonel Murray were come over. He begged his family to show them every attention. He had sent valuable presents to every member of his family; and a letter also from Mrs. Murray informed them that, having through powerful influence been able, without loss of time, to clear their things through the customs, the packages intended for them were now sent off, and she hoped that they would arrive, perhaps even before the letters. Nothing could be more charming than Mrs. Murray's letter, excepting those which Edward himself sent. His life in India was a golden one. He had now his colonelcy; he had gained great reputation and wealth, also, in a late warlike expedition; and again he repeated his wish—that wish which he seemed to cherish so fondly—that his beloved sister would come out to him.

"How foolish it is of Edward talking in this way!" said Mrs. Colville; "but then, poor fellow, of course he knows nothing of Ada's prospects at home."

Edward's letter to his sister breathed the same wish. Mrs. Murray, he said, would return in six months, and she had promised to take charge of Ada if she would

come out. Ada read the letter, and smiled and sighed at the same time. Her heart glowed warmly with affection for this best beloved brother. She knew how he loved her. She folded the letter, and clasping it tightly in her folded hands pondered upon resolves which lay deep within her own soul.

"Where is Agnes?" asked Mrs. Colville, in an impatient voice, as late in the afternoon she wanted her to assist in putting aside the splendid eastern gifts, with which, on the opening of Edward's packages, the drawing-room was strewn.

"Where is Agnes?" inquired Ada also, as laden with India muslins and scaris, some resembling in texture and refinement of silvery net-work, the opal-colored dragon-fly's wing.

But Agnes was not at home. Some one had seen her nearly an hour before walking through the shrubbery towards the park. There was no doubt, therefore, but that she had taken her daily walk; and with a little impatience of temper Ada carried the things into her boudoir.

Agnes was punctual to Jeffkins's appointment. The fallen tree lay a little aside from the road, closely concealed from view by the leafy trees and underwood, and to it Agnes conducted her humble friend whom she found waiting her. She saw at a glance the havoc which misery and sorrow had made in him. His thinned and whitened hair; his wrinkled, and care-worn, and haggard countenance; his stooping, enfeebled figure; how different to the bold-fronted, and strong-limbed Jeffkins of former years! But she was not surprised at all this; she had seen the beginning of this pulling down of his human strength and pride before she left London; and the sad terminating scene of the tragedy must necessarily have ploughed too deeply into heart and frame not to have left ineffaceable traces. A faint expression of pleasure, a smile it could not be called, beamed over his countenance, like the pale sunshine of a winter's day; and that expression was infinitely touching. It came for a moment, and then was gone again; and Agnes saw how unused that face was to any shadow of gladness. He did not offer his hand at first, nor did he trust his voice to utter a word. Agnes, however, offered hers with a gentle kindness that called tears to his eyes. He grasped her hand and turned aside his face to weep.

"You have found them!" said Agnes, thinking it best at once to face the subject for which they met. "Thank heaven! you have found them—poor Mrs. Marchmont and the child!"

"May the Lord reward you!" said he. "But I have suffered a deal! The child is like her. God in heaven! I thought it would have killed me when I saw it first; the same complexion; the same eyes; the same expression! But"—and here he clasped his hands tightly together, as if keeping back some strong feeling, while he groaned as if from the depths of his soul. "I have heard much from Mrs. Marchmont, the truth of which I must know. I have heard surmises as to the father of the child. A desire has taken possession of me to see him, to speak to him—to him! the betrayer of my unhappy daughter! Oh, there was no dewy flower more pure than she, until she left me; until she met with him! There is a heavy debt between us, God knows only how it must be paid!"

He pressed his hand upon his brow, walked backwards and forwards a few paces, and then continued:

"You saw my unhappy daughter, Miss Lawford, the night before you left London. God knows, but most likely you were the last human being in whom she put any confidence, perhaps the last to whom she addressed a word. She loved you, she trusted you when she dared not to trust me. Ah, I was harsh and unsympathizing to her; and bitterly have I been punished! She left to your care the child whom she had abandoned. Tell me, then," said he, fixing his eyes sternly and searchingly upon Agnes, "did she name to you the father of her child? Answer me as you would answer God at the last judgment—did she, or did she not? I conjure you, by your blessed father's memory, not to sport with my feelings, but tell me, yes, or no!"

"She did!" replied Agnes.

"Name him, then!" said Jeffkins, in a low but terrible voice.

Agnes hesitated.

"I will know the man," resumed Jeffkins, "who dragged that innocent girl to perdition; who blasted her young life with sin and sorrow! I will know the man who has made me childless—who has blasted my life—who has filled my soul with the passions of a demon. Tell me, what is his name, that I may hate him; that I may pray God to curse!"

"Silence! for heaven's sake!" interrupted Agnes, with a commanding voice. "Is it for this that you have sent for me? In the open sunshine and the free air of heaven to curse a sinful fellow-creature?"

"Forgive me!" said Jeffkins, with a pale and agonized countenance; "but you know not the hell of hatred and vengeance that is within me. God forgive me!" continued he, "for I, too, am a sinner; but I have suffered worse than martyrdom in the ruin and perdition of my girl! Oh, Miss Agnes," said he, without a tear in his eye, but with an anguish of heart which made large drops of sweat stand like beads upon his forehead, "all that you were to your father, she was to me! For what was I a proud man? For her! For what did I toil and hoard up my hard-earned gains? For her! She it was who gladdened my nights and my mornings! For her I thought; for her I prayed; for her I would have died! If I were harsh to her; if I denied her even a ribbon, I made myself suffer some privation too! She knew not—no one knew how I loved her! And she was worthy of my love; she was pure and loving till that scoundrel met with her, and ruined her! What wonder then is it, that I should curse him! My very nature is changed when I think of him! I believed myself to have been resigned. I thought that I had said in the midst of my affliction and suffering,



with my entire heart, Thy will be done! But it was not so! I thirst now for vengeance. God only keeps my hands from shedding blood; but let me have vengeance!" said he, and ground his teeth together with an expression of ineffable hatred.

"Alas!" said Agnes, mildly but sorrowfully, "how little did I expect this. I thought the affliction with which you had been visited, had purified, at the same time that it had stricken you! Christ, who endured so much for our sakes, prayed for his murderers!"

"I too," returned Jeffkins, "could have prayed for mine. But there are worse sufferings even than the death upon the cross, and these I have borne! Do you deem it a light thing to have seen my daughter dead by her own hands—a thing of infamy and despite: to know that she had gone from sin to judgment; that humbled, outraged, and in despair, she had fled from life which was a burden to her, to death, her only refuge! Is this a light thing to bear?"

"No, it is not light," returned Agnes, "but God lays no burdens upon us, and permits none to be laid, which we have not strength to bear! You have been stricken to the dust, but he has not forgotten you. He has placed in your hands the child of that unfortunate mother. Her end is bitter, but God is merciful, and in its very bitterness I can see her cure. He who suffered Mary Magdalene to wash his feet with her tears is not less merciful, is not less full of pity and forgiveness now than then. Poor Fanny's life was latterly one of sin, but God knows, if the soul consented. Do not distrust God, dear friend," said she, laying her hand softly on his arm; "I believe that there are greater sinners, against whom the world brings no accusation, than your poor daughter—even as, among her accusers, there was not found one guiltless enough to cast a stone at the woman taken in adultery."

These gentle words, like the rod of Moses on the rock in Horeb, called forth tears. One after another they chased each other down his hollow cheeks, and Agnes continued, "God, as I said, has not forgotten you: he has work for you yet to do. He has called you out of your cheerless affliction to a high and a holy duty. To preach to the poor, to touch the heart of the sinner by words; to pray by the dying; to be a father to a child more forlorn than an orphan! Is it then for you to cherish hatred and thoughts of vengeance in your soul? to meditate upon that which may lead to deeds of blood? to take upon yourself the authority of God, who says that vengeance is mine? Oh, no! Yours is a work of love; you are to be a disciple of Christ, and to labor in his spirit. And, depend upon it, that the betrayer of your daughter will be visited by a pang more severe even than that of a dagger. Remorse and repentance will visit him. But leave all punishment to God. He has called you to a brighter and a better mission; that of love and forgiveness."

Jeffkins seated himself on the tree, and bowing his face to his knees wept bitterly.

"You have saved my soul!" at length he said, raising his head whilst a mild expression beamed upon his countenance. "I will do Thy will, oh Lord!"

"You will pray," said Agnes, "that your sins be forgiven to you, even as you forgive those who sin against you?"

"So help me God! I will!" returned Jeffkins.

"You will forgive him who has been worse even than a murderer to you?" said Agnes.

"So help me God!" said he, raising his eyes and his hands to Heaven; "and more, even if that may be!"

"Behold him, then!" said she, sinking down upon the tree beside him, and laying her hand on his arm.

Tom Lawford on horseback, as on the former occasion, rode up the dingle, humming a low air to himself, and beating time to it with his riding-whip.

Jeffkins seemed at once as if deprived of volition. A pallor stole over his countenance; his eyes seemed starting from their sockets; and like a statue, his convulsive breathing alone telling that life was within him, he sat looking at the young man between the tree-branches as he passed.

When he was out of sight, a sort of shudder passed over his frame; and, clasping his hands before his face, he sat for some moments in silent, but agonizing communion with his own soul and God.

"May the Almighty Father bless you, and strengthen you for His good work and to your own peace!" said Agnes, with deep emotion and clasped hands, as she stood before him.

Jeffkins looked her in the face with an expression of pity—"It is then a Lawford, as I was told—one who could have no thought or will to make her his wife; and at your prayer, and for your sake, I have forgiven him!"

"Not for my sake," replied Agnes; "but for the sake of God, who is the father of us all, and of Jesus Christ, who is our savior, our friend, and our teacher in all things!"

"I have forgiven him," again said Jeffkins. "Hand of mine shall never be raised to injure him, nor shall my tongue curse him. But," said he, solemnly addressing Agnes, "for the sake of virtue, for the sake of what womanhood suffered in the person of my poor girl—her downfall and her death—listen not to him! Let him not win your heart as he has won others! May blessed angels watch over you! and if the prayers of a poor sinner like me may prevent a mischief or a sorrow, they shall be yours night and morning!"

He turned about to go; his countenance was mild but sorrowful; he stood more erect, and he trod with a firmer step. He had listened to the voice of God, who had given him a holy vocation, and his whole being was strengthened and ennobled by it.

Again he turned back, and blessed Agnes; she gave him her blessing in return. They parted, and each slowly took their different ways.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE dinner-bell had rung both at the Hall and the rectory, where all the guests were assembled, before Agnes reached home. There was no one to dine there that day, but Agnes and her uncle; and the old gentleman was very angry that she had not returned in time to sit down with him. He had taken his soup, and was busy over his boiled capon when she entered. She never had seen him so angry with her before; and what was worse she could not give any satisfactory account of that which had detained her so long. She had been no farther than the dingle at the bottom of the park, and yet she had been away quite three hours. It was a very thoughtless thing of her, he said, to go sauntering about by herself in lonesome places in that way—how could she tell but that she might meet with that fellow Marchmont, and even worse than he? It was very improper of her! He used to think he said, that Mrs. Colville complained of her *outré* notions without cause, but he should not think so any longer now!

Through more than half the dinner he scolded her, and through the remainder of it he said nothing at all; and Agnes, who was more occupied in mind and more agitated in feeling by her interview with Jeffkins than even by her uncle's displeasure, allowed him to maintain his silence unbroken.

After his customary after-dinner nap, Agnes went in as usual, just before his hour for tea. She was resolved that the good old man should now have, as far as she was concerned, one of those quietly amusing evenings of which he was so fond. He was fortunately one of those persons who can bear to hear the same story ten times over; so resolving to struggle against her own abstraction of mind, and determining not to go to Mrs. Sam's that night, she thought over her best stories and her drollest anecdotes, intending to introduce them very cunningly, and to while away his ill-humor by compelling him to laugh. With the tea, however, there was brought in a note from Mrs. Sam, which was to beg that Agnes would come without fail, and to desire her to bring such and such quadrilles with her, as they all knew she excelled in playing. "My dear," and "my dearest Agnes," occurred again and again in the note; but for all that she did not feel flattered into any spirit of compliance.

"What is it?" asked the old gentleman, pettishly. "Is it from Mrs. Sam?"

"Mrs. Colville left word," said the footman, addressing his master, "when she went, that Miss Agnes must go as soon as possible, and Sampson is now waiting to go back with her."

Sampson was Mrs. Colville's own servant, and had accompanied his mistress to the rectory; he had now brought the note, and waited to attend the young lady back.

"I have no wish to go," said she, addressing her uncle. "I very much prefer staying with you."

"It's no use stopping with me, returned the old gentleman; "and I insist upon your going!"

Agnes begged, at all events, to stay with him till after tea; but he was out of humor, and resolute. He insisted upon her going, even though it were only to play for other people's dancing; he could see nothing unreasonable in it, he said; and to humor even his ill-humor, and quite against her own inclination, Agnes went out to prepare her toilette.

Sampson respectfully hinted to her, in passing him in the hall, that he was ordered to return instantly, and not to forget the music.

It was only to play for other people's dancing that she was sent for, and therefore it seemed to her needless to array herself in her new attire; so, making her ordinarily best dress look its best, and with no other ornament than a bouquet of geranium in her bosom, she set off to the rectory.

It was a lovely night; here and there a bird twittered in the trees as they passed; the grasshoppers chirped; and the deer, which lay for the night under a broad oak near the road, started up as they passed, and trotted away a few paces. The very soul of repose lay over everything, but Agnes' mind was not in a state to receive its influence. She could not cease thinking of Jeffkins and his passion of hatred and revenge, and then, like Balaam, blessing the man whom he came to curse.

Light streamed from the rectory windows; and the gay, laughing voices of young people, who had walked out of the heated rooms into the lovely flower-scented garden that surrounded the house, came like sounds from a totally different world to that in which Agnes' mind was thrown. She was now in the garden itself. Lightly attired forms, each paired with a dark attendant, walked slowly along, laughing aloud, or listening to the low discourse of the apparently enamored attendant. Agnes heard that Mrs. Acton was at this party, and Mr. Latimer also, as the lion of the night. Him she fancied that she saw in the distance, with Ada leaning on his arm. Happy Ada! sighed she, as she often had done before.

But Ada was not in the garden, whatever Latimer might be. Ada came up stairs the moment she heard that Agnes was arrived, impatient to see her, and, as she said, to arrange her toilette before she went down stairs.

"But I am not dressed," said Agnes.

Ada seemed annoyed. "At all events you have your new ornaments on," remarked she.

"No, I have not," returned Agnes. "I have only come as a piece of mechanism to play while you dance. I am not at all in a company mood to-night, dear Ada," said she, trying to keep back some tears, which, she could hardly tell why, seemed as if they would come into her eyes.

"Neither am I," said Ada, revealing all at once, spite of her beauty, that some sad and troubling thought was in her heart; "and I shall be thankful when this night is over! But, however," said she, assuming a sudden gaiety, "neither you nor I must go into the room look-

ing doleful. And I wish you had put on your ornaments! I am quite angry that you have not done so!"

They entered the drawing-room, where there were evidently signs of something beyond an impromptu dance. The moment her Aunt Colville saw her, she came to her also across the room, her countenance giving evidence of rigorous displeasure—"What in the world has possessed you to come dressed in this manner? It is quite a disrespect to us all! And what could make you stop out so long this afternoon? You ought to have been back long before it was time for us to go. It was very thoughtless of you; and now to come dressed in that figure!"

"Never mind my dress, dear aunt," said Agnes, assuming a cheerful air, "I am only going to play."

Her cousin also whispered to her, with dissatisfaction in his countenance, "That she should have put on her new dress. And Ada says," said he, as if he knew nothing of the matter, "that you have some handsome new ornaments—why did you not wear them? We all wanted you to look your very best to-night!"

Agnes made no reply; she thought of the last time she had seen him; not many hours before, when she had turned the hand of almost a murderer aside from him. How little can one human being understand the heart of another! Tom thought that Agnes was out of humor; and really, out of humor himself, he turned hastily from her to flirt with the silliest girl in the room.

"That is Mr. Frank Lawford's daughter, who has sat down to the piano," said George Bridport to the gentleman who stood next to him.

The gentleman looked at her through his eye-glass—"She's a devilish pretty figure," said he, "and has beautiful eyes! 'Pon my word, I think she is a pretty girl!"

"But devilish ill-dressed for a party like this," said George Bridport, loud enough for her to hear him.

At this moment Mrs. Acton, who was only just then aware of her being in the room, seated herself by her, and talked to her kindly and cheerfully.

Mrs. Sam in the meantime, had duly informed the company that Miss Agnes Lawford was so good as to offer to play a few quadrilles. The young people were delighted—they came flocking in from the garden bringing a cool, fresh air with them. All was bustle and animation, bows and smiles of beseeching and assenting partners; and now the quadrille was formed, and Agnes began to play. She played beautifully, people said, remarking that it was delightful to dance to music like this; they thought she must be a great musical genius. Mr. Latimer danced with Ada. They, too, had only come in as the quadrille was formed, and Agnes had not exchanged a word with him.

When the first set was ended, he came to her, and asked her to dance the second with him. Mrs. Acton at that very moment was insisting upon taking Agnes' place at the piano. "The young men would be in despair, if you were to sit all the evening," said she, laughing. "My brother, I am sure, would scold me, if I were to allow you to play the next quadrille." These words were on her lips, as he in person made his request.

Many people thronged about her to thank her for her playing. They had never danced to better music before. She must be very fond of music, &c.

"But my dress," said Agnes, appealing to Mrs. Acton. "I only come to play, really."

"Your dress is charming—most becoming to you," whispered she to Agnes; and then turning to the admirers of Agnes' music, she said, "that they must be content with something less perfect this time for Miss Agnes was going to dance."

Agnes thought of her aunt, and of Mrs. Sam, and begged again to decline; and Latimer stood and looked at her with a calm and yet admiring countenance, which more than anything else disconcerted her.

"I cannot think of your sitting down to the piano, Mrs. Acton," said Mrs. Sam coming up. "Indeed I cannot! Agnes was so good as to offer; it was very good-natured of her; yes, she does play beautifully," said she to some admirer of Agnes' musical power. "I am not sure though, that Agnes dances, Mr. Latimer. I believe you do not, Agnes." Of course Agnes ought to have said *no*; but she did not, and to prevent any other answer Mrs. Sam went on: "I wish now, as the young people seem to enjoy dancing so much, that I had had a musician for the night; but I was uncertain whether a dance would be liked. Our rooms are not large," said she, glancing from one end of her handsome drawing-room to the other.

"I pray you to intercede for me," said Mr. Latimer, taking hold of Agnes' hand, and addressing Mrs. Sam; "she declines dancing. If she will not be my partner I shall sit down myself," said he laughing.

"We must not let you sit," said Mrs. Sam, assuming at once a gay humor, "You do Agnes great honor; and of course she will not decline; but I had no idea that she danced," said she, looking very significantly at her.

Mr. Latimer smiled and bowed, and leading Agnes away triumphantly, placed her so that young Bridport, who was about to dance with Ada, was her *vis-à-vis*. Agnes' heart beat, and she looked with an expression of ineffable love on her cousin, resolving, even though he were her partner, to absorb as little of his attention as she could—but there was something sad and inexplicable in Ada's eyes. The next moment a proud and cold expression came over her features. She is offended with me, thought Agnes; I am wounding her by dancing with Mr. Latimer. I am perhaps exciting that most painful of all passions, jealousy! Agnes thought how already she had been the means, all innocently as it was, of wounding her cousin's pride and ambition. The album-like volume, and the note came to her mind; and then her noble and ingenious confession; the unavailing of her love and her hopes. How inexpressibly dear was Ada to her, as she thought rapidly on the things! She



saw her beautiful figure in its elegant dress floating along; she took, in passing, the lovely hand, and endeavored by a gentle pressure to convey a feeling of the love and tenderness that was in her heart. But Ada was now laughing gaily with her partner, and looking again the happiest, as well as the loveliest in the room.

"It is all my own fancy!" thought Agnes. "Mr. Latimer's dancing with me affects not Ada; she knows that he does so, as no doubt is the fact, because I am the poorest and the worst-dressed girl in the room!"

She resolved to be as gay as the rest. Young Bridport thought that the eyes of his *vis-a-vis* were even more beautiful than he had at first imagined, and that really she looked such a thorough-bred gentlewoman, that he could no longer think her ill-dressed.

Nothing but the most general conversation passed between Mr. Latimer and herself; but when that quadrille was ended she determined to dance no more that night.

Many young men, when it was finished, offered themselves as her partners, but she resolutely sat down to the instrument to play. From a cause which was, many people believed, easy of explanation, the next quadrille was not nearly as well played as the former one. Mr. Latimer took his place beside her, and Ada, who had declined dancing, sat on the other side of the room. Ada seemed neither chagrined nor neglected; many admirers, the least enamored of whom by no means was the handsome George Bridport, were around her; but for all that, Agnes never lost the thought of her.

"I wish I could transport you to the vacant chair beside Ada!" thought Agnes, as Mr. Latimer's hand turned over each succeeding page of her music-book.

Mrs. Colville was winning one rubber after another at whist, so that she saw not what was going forward, but Mrs. Sam was busily looking after the dancing, and she noticed this mal-apropos adjustment of persons with great dissatisfaction.

"You have not played this last quadrille well," said Mrs. Sam, who had determined some time before that there should be no more dancing; "but I dare say, dear, that you are anxious to get back to papa. She is so attentive to papa," said she, turning to Mr. Latimer, "and he is so poorly to-day, it was almost cruel to bring her out."

"I will now go quietly home," said Agnes, aside to Mrs. Sam; "I will make no adieus."

"But I do not know that we can spare any one to go home with you," said Mrs. Sam, who knew that supper would soon be announced.

"My servant shall walk with her," said Mr. Latimer, who, unexpectedly to both parties, had heard what passed.

Whether Mr. Latimer, however, could not find his servant, or whether he wished for the fresh air, and the cool quiet evening walk, or whatever might be his motive, he surprised Agnes by joining her outside the door, and accosting her with—"Permit me to be your attendant, Miss Agnes, instead of my servant."

"I cannot, indeed, Mr. Latimer," said Agnes, stopping; "the distance is so short, and I quite prefer going alone; the air is fresh and pleasant after the hot drawing-room, and there is no danger for me!"

He took her hand and drew it within his arm, with the air of one who will have his own way; and yet there was a something in his manner, tender at once and deferential, that troubled her. She recalled the conclusion of her former arguments, that he noticed her, and paid attentions to her, because his benevolence made her very deficiencies interesting to him; but on this occasion there surely was something more. Ah, poor Agnes! with a sentiment which she would not have dared to confess to herself, she felt her hand within his, and resting upon his arm, and then she was walking step for step by his side. They walked both slowly and silently. A tumult of strange emotion was in her heart; a short spiritual combat ensued, and she won, or seemed to win, a victory over herself.

"My cousin Ada is beautiful!" said she, speaking in the strength of her self-vanquishment.

"Very beautiful," said Mr. Latimer, emphatically.

"She is a noble creature," returned Agnes. "I think very few persons do her justice; I question if you do, for she is not merely a beautiful girl, but she has high estimable qualities. I think her one of the most interesting characters I know. I cannot see any fault in her, and I am convinced that she must be greatly improved since you left." Agnes longed to tell the substance of the confession she had made, but Ada's strict prohibition forbade it.

"I think very highly of her powers," said Mr. Latimer, in a voice which to Agnes seemed cool and measured, "and I know no one more capable of developing herself nobly than Ada. There was a time," continued he, after a pause, "when I tried to use my influence with her; but Ada is one of those who must find the right way herself, and, sooner or later, she will find it, no doubt."

"She has found it already," said Agnes, warmly, "she is as noble as she is beautiful. I wish I could make you think as highly of her as I do myself," added she, feeling almost desperate in her cousin's cause.

"We are nearly at the end of our walk," said Mr. Latimer abruptly, "and I must not forget my sister's commission to me. She came out to bid you good-bye but I promised to do it for her, and to beg you to make one of a picnic party to Bradgate Park—merely her own family, your uncle's, Mr. and Mrs. Sam, and myself, on Tuesday week."

"I should like it extremely," said Agnes, "if I can go—if my uncle can spare me."

"You must go, and he must spare you," returned Mr. Latimer; "for, to tell you the truth," said he, laughing, "the party is made for you and me. You, as the entire stranger; I, as the last arrival; and the party without either of us, would be like Hamlet, with the part of Hamlet left out."

Agnes hoped to herself that neither he nor his sister would say this to any of her uncle's family, and this brought them to the Hall.

"I wish Mr. Latimer would be more attentive to Ada," thought she, as she entered her chamber for the night; "however, the very next time I go out, I will dress myself in my very best, and make the very most of myself, and owe nothing to compassion!"

Yes, so she said; but through the sleepless night that followed, she took a strict and close survey of the true connection which existed relatively between Mr. Latimer, her cousin, and herself; and there was something much more momentous than this or that dress, or this or that casualty, which was the mainspring of Mr. Latimer's behavior. Then, as regarded herself, how different was her feeling now toward him to what it had been on that first evening of their meeting, when she so unwittingly revealed to him all her domestic affections and sorrows! Yes, between then and now a very different feeling had sprung up; and very different too was it now to what it was only comparatively a few hours ago! It was love which she was admitting into her heart! And this love, which was so flattering, so seductive, was treachery to her cousin—to her who had confided so much to her keeping—who had suffered already so much from them. It appeared to her at that moment almost criminal; and if she stole away Latimer's heart, however rich the prize, it could only be at the purchase of Ada's happiness. Better ten times that I should suffer than do this! said she. The true path for her to take, however, seemed hidden from her. She prayed for aid, and all seemed darkness and uncertainty around her. She knew not that which was right for her to do. For one moment it appeared better that she should leave Lawford. In a great measure, if not altogether, her mission as regarded poor Fanny Jeffkins' child was fulfilled, if not to the letter, yet fully as to the spirit; and now she had duties to perform to others, to herself, to her cousin, to her uncle, who had been as a father to her. Her duty to these was alike—to promote the well-being and happiness of each—but then, would her leaving Lawford do this? She knew not. However, she had a true friend and counsellor in her mother, and to her she determined to write. She had related to her all that had hitherto occurred, and now again she would be faithfully candid, and her advice should be her guide. In the meantime, she resolved that nothing should induce her to neglect the most rigid fulfilment of her duty, nor would she give any ground for reproach. Her place was with her uncle, and him alone. She determined to avoid Mr. Latimer's society, and even his sister's, and not to give them any reason to suspect the treacherous inclinations of her own heart.

Such were the resolves which, in the stillness of the night, Agnes made; she prayed earnestly for the assistance of Heaven to strengthen her in this and all other trials; and with a stronger and more cheerful mind, she arose the next morning.

## CHAPTER XVII.

A SLEEPLESS night was passed also by Ada. She had felt that Mr. Latimer's behavior to her through the evening, although courteous and very friendly, was not that of the devoted lover. She had worn outwardly a gay, untroubled countenance—she had laughed and sung, and accepted the attentions of people she cared nothing about. But now that she was alone, she gave way to her real feelings. She wept bitterly; she reproached Latimer in her mind with the proverbial inconstancy of his sex; she resolved to call up all her womanly pride, and be equally indifferent. But that, on the other hand, seemed easier said than done; a miserable feeling, as if everything was a blank, lay upon her soul; spite even of pride and "womanly spirit." And then there slid in a soft, persuading sentiment that she might yet win him—beautiful she was, and worthy of him; she would be humble, and gentle, and solicit his teaching; she would let him see how faithful her heart had been. As to his attentions to Agnes, he was interested probably with her from several causes. She had known him often, in former years, leave her, the worshiped queen of the room, to dance with, or pay attention to some deformed or neglected girl. She did not in reality attach so very much importance to that; he was interested in Agnes for her father's sake; she had expected that he would be so; and if she herself would only condescend to let him know that his favorite author was hers also—that they had tastes, and feelings, and pursuits in common, she might win him, spite of his indifference. Ah! these were only dreams of the night! In the morning she awoke with the feeling that it in vain to strive against the natural character. Reserved and proud she naturally was; reserved and proud she must remain to be. She could not, in the state of feeling that he now was, hint to him even, of what she had done for his sake; not even if by not so doing she must die! If, on the contrary, he had returned as he went, then how easily would all have been told; then heart would have responded to heart. Now, when Ada thought upon the confession which she had made to Agnes it burned within her soul like fire. She felt humiliated, and a feeling of resentment rankled in her heart.

It was an unpleasant meeting for all parties, and yet outwardly very little was indicated. Nay, even Mrs. Colville herself seemed more than usually gracious. She, however, was full of bitter displeasure. Hence it was that during the day she took an opportunity of having a private interview with Tom. Private interviews with him were not very general things, because Mrs. Colville was never quite sure how far her nephew acted with her; but Mrs. Sam, with whom Mrs. Colville had already canvassed the subject under discussion, advised that Tom should be counseled with.

"I am not satisfied with Mr. Latimer's conduct," said she, after she had introduced the subject, as she thought, in a manner flattering to his brotherly pride.

"Nor am I," said Tom, abruptly.

"Then you observed how indifferent he seemed about her?" asked she: "I hope nobody else did!"

"Very likely not," returned Tom; "but we were very naturally alive to the subject. 'Pon my word, I thought he seemed much more of a lover to Agnes than to Ada!"

"It is very wrong of Agnes to encourage him. I can see plain enough how much delighted she is with his attention—it is very wrong of her! I never expected we should have been having any love affairs with her, and especially with Mr. Latimer! I told Mrs. Acton that she had no fortune, that she was quite dependent upon her uncle—and then to think of coming in that dress! I declare I am quite provoked when I think of it!"

"It is possible," said Tom, speaking the idea which had occurred to himself, "that Mr. Latimer paid all that attention to her because she was not remarkably well dressed—and yet, after all, she really did not look amiss!"

"For our sweet Ada's sake," said Mrs. Colville, "we cannot have this going on. It is wrong of Mr. Latimer, and it is still worse of Agnes, who owes so much to her uncle; it is perfect ingratitude, I can call it nothing else; and she shall leave us, as sure as she is alive, if she set herself up as a rival to Ada. And, by-the-by, who was it that walked home with her last night? I had a mind to ask her point-blank this morning at breakfast, but I thought the very suspicion of its being Mr. Latimer would be so unpleasant to poor Ada."

"I don't know," said Tom; "I did not know that she was gone until supper was half over. I know, however, that Latimer was not in when supper began. George Bridport took in Agnes; I almost expected that I must do it myself. But I cannot credit it, that Latimer walked home with her."

"I asked Sykes this morning," said Mrs. Colville, "but she could not tell me. Nobody was with her at the door. However, I'll find it out! And then there is another thing," began Mrs. Colville, evidently on a new idea, "who was it that sent her those jet ornaments? surely that was not he?"

Tom laughed aloud; "No," said he, "nothing of the kind! Her uncle in Scotland, or her brothers, or some of her London friends. Latimer! God bless me, how could you think of such a thing!"

"Well, I have spoken my mind to you," said the old lady, "and we must consider what is to be done. We must not have Ada's prospects in life ruined, and the whole country laughing at us, for a little insignificant girl like that, without a penny to her fortune!"

Tom looked as if he were about to say something in opposition to his aunt, but he merely ended by repeating her words, that they must certainly consider what was to be done.

Tom, however, needed very little time for consideration; he had already, and before his aunt spoke, made up his mind as to what he was to do.

In the afternoon, as usual, when her uncle, who had fully and freely forgiven all her shortcomings of the day before, and had even, dear old man, asked her to pardon his petulance, was gone out in his bath-chair. Agnes went out too, hoping, as she always did, amid the quiet of nature, to allay the troubles, and agitations, and uncertainties of her own heart. She avoided the dingle to-day, unwilling to recall more vividly than it yet lived in her mind the strange interview with Jeffkins, and taking a shorter cut, went direct to Woodbury Lane, as being the most retired place in the neighborhood. She walked as far as the little bridge over the Merley brook, and then she sat down. What was her surprise, and no less her chagrin, when her Cousin Tom, who, as on former afternoons, but now on foot, must have taken the bridge road down the dingle, was now seen coming down the lane, in that direction towards her. It was no use trying to escape him; they saw each other at the first moment, and the next he was at her side.

There was a friendly expression in his eyes, and a peculiar meaning in his voice as he said, "I knew you were here, Agnes, and therefore I came. I hope it is not unpleasant to you."

"I came for a solitary walk," returned Agnes. "I have just now many things to think of."

"And so have I," said he; "and yet, more correctly speaking, I have but one; and I may as well be candid with you at once; it is yourself. It is no use trying to conceal it any longer; and you must long have been aware of it—I love you, Agnes, most desperately; most sincerely."

"For Heaven's sake, do not say so," returned Agnes, with a pale cheek and an earnest voice. "It will bring much unhappiness to us both, and much confusion in your family, and much trouble."

"Impossible," said Tom, speaking in a bold and cheerful voice, taking at the same time his cousin's hand, which she did not withdraw, "who is there to say that I do wrong in marrying you? I am my own master; my father loves you as a daughter already. Ada loves you like a sister; my Aunt Colville is not of the consequence she fancies herself; we will have you, as my own dear little wife, mistress at Lawford, and then the old lady may look out a home for herself."

Tom spoke like a lover who has no fear of unsuccess; in fact, he never dreamed of it.

"It cannot be!" returned Agnes, in a voice deeply agitated.

"And why not?" asked he. "What can possibly prevent it? My whole life shall make you happy; and more than that, Agnes," said he, looking tenderly into her face, "shall make me deserve the happiness of being your husband. You know not," continued he, in his peculiarly persuasive voice, "the immense influence which you have over me. I am already far different from what I was. I believe that I am a better man; it is you who have made me so. You can make me what you like."



"I believe of a truth," said Agnes, "that a very noble nature lies within you. I believe you to be capable of every good sentiment. I bless God, indeed, if I have been the means of awakening one better thought in your soul—but your wife I never can be."

"And why not?" demanded he; "there are no difficulties that cannot be overcome. As to fortune," said he, thinking that perhaps that was in her mind, "I want not a farthing with you. I want you and nothing more—you are far dearer to me than a million of money; and as to any differences of opinion—there are none. I think as you do; you have never uttered one sentiment, however my Aunt Colville may have made an outcry about it, that has not had a response in my own heart. You have been like the light of truth to me; you have dispersed many errors. As my wife, it will be my pride to make you happy. Where, then, is the impossibility?"

"Dear cousin," said Agnes, looking at him with the most friendly candor, "you will give me credit for truthfulness of character—you can believe that what I say, I mean; and that I would not willingly say anything which should deeply wound you, without having grave and convincing proof to myself of its truth and its necessity. Believe me then when I say, it is impossible for me to become your wife. I love you as a dear friend and brother; you are more interesting to me than I can tell, or you can well conceive. God knows how willingly I would serve you; but in this one particular I cannot! That you love me I sincerely believe, but that you do so, I consider one of the saddest events of my life, because I must give you pain!"

"This is the merest mockery, Agnes," said he, impatiently; "what is love either as a friend or a sister when the heart makes a much warmer demand! True love is a thing not to be trifled with—not to be given by weight and measure. If a true heart, Agnes, an amended life, a devotion which death only can end, can win from you no better return than this, then there is only one conclusion to be drawn—and the conclusions of my Aunt Colville," said he in a tone of bitterness, "may not, after all, be so very much wrong—it may be true, that you are placing yourself as a rival to Ada."

"Does Mrs. Colville, then, say so?" asked Agnes, suddenly startled by the words. "Ah, no! God forbid that I should do such a thing! I will now be candid with you, because I am sure that you deserve that I should be so. The slight attentions which Mr. Latimer paid me last night troubled me greatly; how thankfully would I have placed him by Ada's side! And these things, slight as they may be, have determined me to leave Lawford. My solitary walk this morning was to think over my plans. I have already written to my mother to announce my intentions. This, I think, will prove to you that I wish not to be Ada's rival."

"There is no need for you to leave us," said he, "and the best way, and the surest, and the wisest way of proving that your heart has no interest in Mr. Latimer, is to accept of my hand and heart. Say yes, dearest Agnes," pleaded he. "If you could only know the sincerity of my love, could only give me credit for the good that I know myself to be capable of, and which you have, unconsciously to yourself, awoke into vigorous growth within me, you would not drive me to despair by rejecting my suit! "Does there yet remain an impossibility?" asked he impatiently, as he yet saw her pale and distressed countenance.

"Relying," she said, "on the good that is within you, I will say a few words—strange words, of a truth, for me to say—but they will explain all to you." She paused, for she had given herself a difficult task, and it was not without an effort that she thus continued:

"Before I came to Lawford a sad secret was committed to me by one whose life was your sacrifice."

Tom dropped the hands which he had held and turned pale.

"On the last evening of her unhappy life," continued Agnes, "an evening which terminated a short career of sin and misery, she intrusted to me, upon her bended knees, the child which, with mistaken views that brought on her an awful punishment, she had abandoned. To the last moment I am convinced that you were dearer to her than life."

Tom pressed his hand upon his brow, but made no reply.

"By the merest chance in the world, yet I believe through the hand of God, I found the child in the caravan of those poor Marchmonts who were in this very lane. But you know the history of the poor child," said she "as well as I do."

"And what is this that you have been plotting and caballing with those wretched people?" asked he, evidently assuming anger to conceal deeper feelings.

"Nothing," returned she, mildly, "the secret which that unhappy girl confided to me, has never passed my own breast. The woman, however, was at the point of death; the child about to be abandoned a second time; the husband, a brutal and dissolute man, would not permit the clergyman to visit his wife, because, as you know, he had inveterate hatred against Mr. Colville. I therefore sent for the father of the child's mother; he is a good man, and one whom my father knew well—the child is now in his hands—it will want no more."

"And for what is this wretched history now brought up against me?" demanded he, "these are some of the *outré* notions of which my Aunt Colville complains; and it is a peculiar subject, too, for a young lady to introduce to a gentleman!" and with these words there was an attempted jeer in his countenance.

"You pressed me very closely," returned Agnes, "or I would not have spoken of it. You may treat it with levity, but I cannot do so. You may still consider it, as no doubt you do, a light thing, to win the love of a poor girl to whom you could make no restitution, only for her ruin; but, believe me, in the eyes of God, of truth, and justice, it is not so. This it is, I candidly confess to you, *outré* as my notions may appear, which

kept my heart safe while it acknowledged your native goodness, and whilst it blessed you for being kind to me—very kind, when others were not so—this it was which kept my heart free from any warmer sentiment than friendship and gratitude. These I have always felt for you, and these I shall always feel; and I conjure you, by all that is sacred and dear to you, to listen to the better voice within your own soul, which even now reproaches you for having treated that as a trifle which was a great and an awful sin!"

He knew that every word which she said was true, but pride and an evil spirit warred yet against the good that was in him.

"If women," continued Agnes, "would but be faithful to virtue, not only in their own persons, but for virtue's own sake, and would feel, as truly is the case, that the whole sex is injured if but one woman fall, then how differently would men treat women!"

The evil spirit within his heart suggested to him to turn her words to ridicule; to question even whether the faultless Latimer were really without sin? but his newly awakened and better nature silenced the spirit; his answer therefore was of another kind.

"Agnes," said he, in a voice which wrung her heart but to hear, "is my crime, then, like Cain's, to make me an outcast forever? Does my error, which may have its palliation, exclude me forever from hope? Cannot sincere repentance, cannot an after life of purity and truth atone to your sense of virtue for one transgression? I acknowledge that I have sinned. I will make all the reparation in my power—all that even you can require from me. I will acknowledge the child of that unhappy girl. I will do all you ask, all you demand—only refuse me not your love!"

Agnes felt that the time of trial was now at hand. She was silent, and the eloquent tears rolled down her cheeks. She counseled deeply with her own heart; many feelings—and a woman is often never nearer to accepting a man than when she refuses him, strange as the paradox may appear—pleaded in his favor. Feelings of deep compassion for him; entire trust in her power over him for good; gratitude for much kindness all pleaded for him; but still there was another voice, strong in its sense of truth and right, which said *no*—and to that she listened, although it compelled her to a hard task.

"Speak, Agnes," pleaded the young man, earnestly, "say that you will not cast me off, and my life and all that I have is yours!"

"May God in heaven strengthen us both?" said Agnes, in a broken voice, "but we must part!"

"We part, then!" returned he, in a voice which went to her heart, "and may God bless you, but you have made a miserable man of me, when you might have made me so happy!"

And without another word or look, like one who was prepared to meet his fate, he turned and slowly walked away.

Whether she had done right or wrong, for the first sad moments after his departure, she knew not. She felt like one who has been stunned, and all was dark within her mind. She sat for some time after he was out of sight, and then she, too, arose and walked slowly homeward. This declaration had taken her by surprise; she could hardly believe but that it was a strange and troubled dream.

Tom came not back to dinner; but he was often so very eccentric in his movements that but little notice was taken of the circumstance. Mrs. Colville and Ada sat in the little library in the evening, and Agnes read aloud a new novel of Mrs. Gore's. It was a quiet evening, and over the minds of the household, whatever might be their true inward feelings, there was a great outward serenity. Agnes, however, grew silently uneasy as bed-time approached, and Tom had not yet returned.

"I wonder what is become of him!" said Ada, after her father had retired for the night.

Agnes would have told them that she had seen him that afternoon in Woodbury Lane, but she did not dare to trust her voice in speaking of him.

At length when it was concluded that the servants must sit up for him, a note was brought in. It had been sent from a roadside inn, where the coach stopped, a few miles off, and was to say, that important business had unexpectedly taken him from home; that his portmanteau, with such things as he enumerated, should be sent to him at Leicester the next day, and that the time of his return was uncertain.

Young Mr. Lawford had his own business, his railway shares to look after, and Heaven knows what; so his absence caused no astonishment.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THREE, four, five days went on quietly, and then a letter came for Agnes from her mother. It was such a letter as she expected. And now her kind considerate uncle prayed her to come to him; she should be to him, he said, as a daughter. He remitted to her money for her journey, and arranged how and when she was to come. "I wish, however," said her mother, towards the end of the letter, "that you could see those dear boys before you leave England—but it is impossible. Their letters are cheerful; they are in good health, and are doing well; but poor Harry feels it very hard to spend his holidays at school. The Carters, to whom they were to go, are called to Boulogne by the dangerous illness of poor Ellen; and the Riddleys have the scarlatina, so that there is nothing for them but to submit, and be as contented as they can."

The expectation of being so soon reunited again to her beloved mother, diffused, for the first time for many days, a cheerfulness over the mind of Agnes. Her mother also entirely approved of her conduct in every way; and how strengthening, in difficult circumstances is the approval of those whose judgment we esteem. It was now time to announce her intentions to her rela-

tives; and, after all, as she expected it would be, it was a very difficult and painful duty. But, however, it must be done.

Ada was alone in her dressing room, and to her Agnes went first.

"I am come to announce to you, dear Ada," she said, "that I am shortly about to leave you. My mother and my uncle wish me to go to them—but I shall never forget your kindness"—more she could not say.

"I know how it is," said Ada; "I suspected as much when Tom went away so suddenly—you have refused him."

Agnes was taken by surprise; she colored deeply, and then turned pale.

"He loved you very dearly," continued Ada, "and, spite of some few drawbacks, he is a very noble fellow. I think that you have acted very unkindly by him, for you can have no idea of his deep love for you."

"Circumstances," returned Agnes, "have made me seem—oh, so unwillingly on my part—to do unkind things to you both. Professions, when the actions do not seem to bear them out, are quite insults. I, therefore will make no professions; but He who reads the heart, and knows every secret action and motive, knows that I have not been actuated by unkindness or mere waywardness, and that I feel nothing but the most disinterested regard and affection for you."

The sincerity with which these words were spoken, carried conviction with them. "I will believe you," said Ada, "I will give you credit for acting truthfully, and perhaps, though I cannot see it, wisely, in refusing my brother. It was, however, a fond wish of my heart that you might have been his wife; and I fear now that you have almost driven him to despair; and yet," continued she, wishing to pique Agnes, and speaking in her cold tone of voice, "that would be very foolish in him. Henrietta Bolton would make him a charming wife; and she, I am sure, would not refuse him."

"I should love Henrietta Bolton," replied Agnes, warmly, "if she would make your brother happy. I am deeply interested in him; much more than you can imagine, or than anyone can."

"What foolish scruples, then, have prevented you from accepting him? If it be fear of my Aunt Colville, that is the iddest thing in the world."

"I have made my decision, dear Ada," said Agnes, "and that not rashly. I may stand accused of folly, and even coldness of heart, but indeed I have not deserved it."

"That we shall see," said Ada, with a voice and manner which showed her to be both wounded and displeased.

Mrs. Colville and Mrs. Sam had come to the firm determination that Agnes must go; it was a thing which admitted of no *pro* and *con*. Go she must. They wished that something would occur to call her away. They did not know on what plea to get rid of her themselves; and then there was another question—would her uncle let her go? That was a doubtful question. But for all that, go she must. Had they not better, they thought, open to him all their plans. He was desirous, of course, that Ada should marry Mr. Latimer; but then the old gentleman was crochety; if he got the slightest idea in his head that Mr. Latimer preferred Agnes to his daughter, he would be very likely to say, "Well, then, let him have her, with all my heart!"

"Poor, dear man!" said Mrs. Colville, "there is no dependence on his mind now; he is sadly shaken!"

However, uncertain as was the step of consulting the old gentleman upon it, one thing was certain, and that was, that Agnes must go!

When, however, Agnes announced to these two ladies her mother's wish and her own intention of leaving Lawford, a very mixed feeling—such is the inconsistency of human nature—came over their minds, of there being a something, after all, at the bottom of this, much deeper than they themselves yet saw. Like Pharaoh with the Israelites, their hearts were hardened, and they were not inclined to let her go. The one looked at the other; the same sentiment was in each breast, and Mrs. Sam spoke for her aunt as well as herself, when she said—"I think it very strange conduct, Agnes. We considered you as engaged here in attending upon your uncle. I am sure that every reasonable attention has been paid to you; you have been treated by us as one of the family; but if you think that you can mend yourself, of course we can have nothing to say, except regretting it on your own account."

"But I think," said the elder lady, without giving Agnes time to reply, "that your uncle will be very much hurt by your conduct. He is very much attached to you, and has been quite a father to you, and you should consider this."

"I do consider it," replied Agnes. "I shall always retain the most grateful sense of my uncle's kindness to me; but circumstances which I cannot control make it very desirable for me to leave. My mother wishes it also. My uncle offers me a home with him, not so splendid as this, certainly, but one which promises me much happiness."

As Agnes said these words, the door opened, and Mr. Latimer was announced. Nothing could be gayer or brighter than his countenance. It was a wonderful contrast to the three which had been in conclave the minute before. His arrival, however, made an instantaneous change in these. The first dinner-bell had just rung, and he immediately declared his intention in coming to be, dining with them. The two Mrs. Colvilles welcomed him most joyfully—it was so friendly of him, so neighborly! Agnes withdrew; and hastening to Ada, informed her of the unexpected dinner guest, and begged also that she might be excused from appearing at table.

"I am not well, dear Ada," she said, and her countenance testified to the truth of her words; "but do not you be angry with me, I feel as if that were more than



"I could bear. The anger of those I love makes my heart ache."

"I cannot be angry with you," said Ada, on whose mind Mr. Latimer's arrival had shed a broad sunbeam of delight; "you disarm my anger by your gentleness—and yet," added she, "I cannot forgive your refusing to become my sister."

It was agreed between the elder and younger Mrs. Colville, that, considering Mr. Latimer was come, not a word should be said about Agnes leaving them. The old gentleman, as yet, knew nothing of it, and they would not spoil the harmony of the party by introducing the subject. He troubled himself very much about Agnes' indisposition, and insisted after dinner that she should have some strong coffee sent up to her, and a smelling-bottle, and begged her to bathe her temples with *eau de Cologne*. He said that he could not do without her.

"It is strange what an effect that girl has upon me, Mr. Latimer," said he, addressing that gentleman, "there is a wonderful something about her that quite takes hold of one. If I had been a young fellow now, I should certainly have been over head and ears in love with her, that I should!" and the old gentleman's eyes twinkled as if tears were in them.

Mr. Latimer laughed merrily, and said that he should not wonder at all; that really there was a deal of truth in what Mr. Lawford said.

"You may laugh," said old Mr. Lawford, "but I'll repeat it, there are not many girls like her."

Mr. Latimer did not incline to controvert that opinion, therefore the old gentleman said no more on the subject.

"I am going to have my nap," said he, when he had finished his half pint of port; "Agnes must come down to me in about an hour—you'll see to it, Ada; and if I am pretty well, you shall all come and have tea with me."

He looked wonderfully good tempered, and, declining the offered arm of Mr. Latimer, he shuffled away to his own room.

Agnes went to him as he desired, resolving not to say a word to him on a subject which would be so painful to him that evening. Instead of so doing, she combed his hair, of which he was so fond, she rubbed his bald head with her soft hand; sung to him and told him little stories. He was as happy as a king; he kissed her tenderly, and called her his pet-child; and then bade her ring for tea.

"You must bring in tea for all," said he to the servant, "and tell the ladies and Mr. Latimer, with my compliments, that I will expect the pleasure of their company to tea."

Agnes could not object, and with the urn came in the household guests. Ada was leaning on Mr. Latimer's arm; the best understanding in the world seemed to exist between them; he placed a chair for her, and seated himself by her side. The two Mrs. Colvilles looked quite triumphant.

Flowers stood on the tea-table, and a soft lamp-light lit the room, which lying away from the west was early dark even in summer. All seemed inviting to the most agreeable social intercourse.

"You have not heard the news," said Mrs. Colville to her brother the moment she was seated. "It has taken us greatly by surprise, but it has delighted us also equally."

"What can it be?" asked Mr. Lawford impatiently. Mr. Latimer laughed, and so did Ada.

"You have not heard of Tom lately," said Mr. Latimer.

"No, upon my word, we have not," returned the old gentleman.

"I have, however," said Mr. Latimer. "He made his appearance at my sister's yesterday, on very important business, that of paying his court to Henrietta Bolton—and of course, with remarkable success. My brother and sister are delighted with it, and so am I."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the old gentleman; "that was his sudden business was it?"

Agnes was making tea; the urn concealed her face from every one. The news indeed surprised her; but in what way it exactly affected her, in the first instance, it would be difficult to say. In some little degree it lessened her regard for him, and yet what a burden it at once lifted from her breast. Pique, no doubt, was at the bottom of it, but still the match was so wise and suitable a one, that she could do no other than rejoice in it.

"Well," said the old gentleman, after a pause, in which he seemed to have been cogitating on the subject; "Miss Henrietta Bolton is a great favorite of mine, and she has done my son great honor in accepting him; but I had laid out my little Agnes there for his wife!"

The eyes of all turned upon her, even Mr. Latimer's, and all with very different feelings.

"But man proposes, and God disposes," said he, "and we'll hope that Agnes will get a good husband somewhere else; but then it will be taking her away from me, and that I should not like; but I am an old man, and I may not live to see that day!"

He was quite affected by his own suggestions, and so also was Agnes.

It was a termination to the merry news of Tom's wooing, which nobody had expected. But the party was not going to be mournful for all that. A few moments restored both Agnes and her uncle to their usual cheerfulness, although the old gentleman gave evidence of weighing the consequences of Tom's marriage through the whole evening. But it had taken a load from the heart of Agnes, which made her feel like a new being. An intelligent look passed between herself and Ada, which said, on the one side, "You see that I have not made Tom irreparably miserable after all!" and on the other, "You see that a very sweet girl would have him, although you would not!" and then the eyes of both expressed the same sentiment, "We are very good friends again with each other, and very well satisfied with the state of affairs!"

When this subject had subsided, Mr. Latimer said, that he had also another little piece of news to tell them, which had given him great pleasure, "and which," said he, addressing Agnes, "will I am sure please you also."

As the last news had been about wooing, a curious sensation went to the heart of every one present as if this too must be of a similar nature—but then what had Agnes to do with it? Every body looked curious and amazed.

"You recollect the other day," said he, turning to Mr. Lawford, "the little affair about that poor fellow Marchmont with the caravan in Woodbury Lane."

"What, he has been taken up, has he?" asked Mrs. Colville triumphantly.

"No, nor I hope is likely to be," replied Mr. Latimer.

Mrs. Colville was not going to oppose any hopes of Mr. Latimer's, however extraordinary they might be, so she left him to continue his narrative.

"Marchmont removed his caravan," continued he, "to Merley Common, just by me. When I had left you the other morning I rode up to the little encampment, and found the poor woman extremely ill. I sent off for the doctor from Merley, and ordered my housekeeper to look after her a little. I heard nothing more about them, until last evening, when, as I was walking in my grounds, I heard a sound, which was not to be mistaken, although it is a very uncommon one in our neighborhood—the singing of a hymn, as if preparatory to a field-preaching."

"Bless me! are the methodists again in the parish?" exclaimed Mrs. Colville.

"It seemed very much like it," replied Mr. Latimer, "and as I do not happen to have any very violent prejudice against the methodists"—(here again was an opinion which, from Mr. Latimer's lips, poor Mrs. Colville was obliged to tolerate)—"I too betook myself to the place where the sound proceeded, and which was that little Merley Common on which Marchmont's caravan stood."

"The devil turned preacher!" said Mr. Lawford laughing, and anticipating what he expected to be the drift of the story.

"No, it was not Marchmont, nor the black adversary in his shape," returned Mr. Latimer, smiling, "although the preacher had made a pulpit of the steps of his caravan. The preacher was a stranger to me, a man perhaps of sixty; a man of the working class, however, with a haggard and care-worn countenance, and thin silvery hair, which was combed back from a forehead which indicated great powers of mind. He had probably been preaching through the week in the neighboring villages, and this now was his Sunday congregation. There were probably two or three hundred people assembled, all neat and decent, people of all ages, in their Sabbath apparel. It was a sight which pleased me greatly. Within the door of the caravan was a singular and interesting group; the sick woman, there also, who now seemed better both in mind and body, sat on her bed, or in a chair propped up with pillows, and at her side a girl held on her knee one of the most beautiful children I ever saw in my life, a living cherub of Murillo. The hymn was just finished, and the preacher gave out his text, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'"

"I have heard many preachers, both at home and in America," continued Mr. Latimer; "I have heard the highest dignitaries in the church, and the most celebrated preachers of the day, both learned and unlearned, but I never heard so effective a sermon as this. There was no ranting, no striving after effect in it; there was no flowery eloquence, nor any appeal to the passions; but it was from beginning to end the strong eloquence of truth kindled into a living flame by the broadest spirit of Christian love. It was a sermon on the mission and power of Christianity, as it comes home to every man's heart and hearth, and every day's experience. The people all round me were weeping; but the most remarkable and interesting feature in the whole scene was poor Marchmont himself. He stood apart from every one, on the outside of the assembly, as if he had not made up his mind whether to go or stay. There was an uneasiness and an uncertainty in his countenance for some time. At length he was fairly won; his hard features relaxed, and then kindled up into a responsive sentiment, and not long afterwards I saw him seated on the ground weeping like a child. It was an extraordinary and really an affecting thing, to see that man, whom the law had pronounced to be a hardened and hopeless criminal, brought into the state of a humble, repentant child, by the simple teachings of the doctrines of love—by the pure gospel!"

"But was it the gospel which really was preached?" asked Mrs. Colville.

"Unquestionably, the repentance-working, purifying, and life-ennobling gospel," returned Mr. Latimer; "and it seems to me that the apostles of our Lord, poor fishers and handicraftsmen, whom He sent abroad to preach and teach, must have been such as this poor, hard-handed mechanic."

Old Mr. Lawford wiped his eyes—"If the Methodists," said he, "can reform such fellows as Marchmont, it is a pity, I think, that they have been sent out of our parish."

"I think so, too," said Mr. Latimer, warmly; "and if their preachers were always like this man, they should have a chapel in my grounds, if there were no other place for them."

Agnes looked at him with an expression of unspeakable admiration and gratitude.

"You approve of this heresy, Miss Agnes," said he, "I see it in your countenance."

Ada would have said that she did so also, spite of her

Aunt Colville and spite of Mrs. Sam; but a something in the expression of his eyes, as he looked at Agnes, a something in the tone of his voice, kept her silent.

What could have made Agnes happier than these tidings! This, then, was poor Jeffkins going forth upon that mission to which she herself had been instrumental in calling him. Perhaps this was the happiest moment of her life; her own little private troubles and uncertainties sunk into nothing as she thought of Jeffkins, an agent in God's hand, and the sinner Marchmont the first-fruits of his faithfulness. God had blessed him and his labors. The sick woman and the child too, would both be saved spiritually and temporally. She could no longer be depressed. Whatever the evening might be to the others, to her it was a happy one; she was raised out of herself; and when Mr. Latimer made the most kind inquiries after her mother and her brothers, as if they had been his own friends, she had forgotten that it was for her sake that this was done, and, in the open-hearted simplicity of a broad Christian love, she told of the poor boys who were forced, so sorely against their will, to spend their holidays at school. "Poor lads," she said, "I wish they were at *Lexford*." Mr. Latimer made many inquiries about them still, and at what school they were. It seemed to please him, just as much as it pleased her, that he knew something about the gentleman with whom they were; they had been members of the same college for some months—Mr. Latimer's college life having begun just before the other gentleman's terminated.

All this was very pleasant; and then arrangements had to be made relative to the Bradgate Park picnic of the morrow. All regarding this day's pleasure had been thrown into confusion and uncertainty by Tom's absence, and Agnes also had felt great difficulty, under existing circumstances, in becoming one of the party. All was right now, however; Tom was to accompany his betrothed and the Actons; and Mr. Latimer had now to propose that the party from the rectory and the Hall, of course including Agnes, should take luncheon at the Hays, which was in their direct way to Bradgate, and then that they should all proceed together to the point of rendezvous in this beautiful old park, where the Actons would meet them punctually at three o'clock, Mr. Latimer stipulating for the pleasure of driving Ada and her cousin in his barouche. Mrs. Acton, whose party this was to be considered, claimed the privilege of providing viands for a cold collation, which was to be spread in some beautifully secluded part of the park. Fire was lighted in gipsy fashion, and coffee, which Henrietta Bolton prided herself in making with great skill in the true continental manner, was to be enjoyed, as rich coffee can only be thoroughly enjoyed, in the open air. The ladies were to sing; the gentlemen were to be as amiable as possible, and all was to be perfect.

Mrs. Colville, and Ada, and Mrs. Sam, approved greatly of the whole arrangements, and agreed to everything.

"I think," said Agnes, who, after all, dreaded this immediate meeting with her cousin, and believing that it would also be unpleasant to him, "that I had much better stay at home with my uncle."

Everyone turned to him, even Mr. Latimer—"I think," said he, addressing the old gentleman, "that you will spare Miss Agnes to be of our party; my sister wishes it very much, and she is the only one amongst us who has not seen the park."

"To be sure, she must go!" said he; "she must go, and bring me the word about Tom and his lady-level! God bless me! to think of his setting off in that silly way!"

It was quite decided that Agnes must go, and she, however reluctant she might be to meet Tom, even as the fiancée of another; and however strong was her conviction that it was not for the peace of her mind, though it might matter nothing to Mr. Latimer, to be much in his society, did not see how she could make opposition.

"Man proposes, and God disposes?" said Mr. Lawford, the next morning, when, after a night of violent thunder, the family, late in the forenoon, still sat over the breakfast-table, looking out into the drenching rain, which looked as if it never would cease. The thunder-storm seemed to be one of that kind, which, after a long period of dry weather, at once breaks it up, and is the precursor of a long wet and cold time.

"There will be no Bradgate Park to-day," said Ada, mournfully, who, feeling confident that Agnes would attach herself to Mrs. Acton through the day, as she had said she would do, in order to enjoy as much of her pleasant society as was possible, had anticipated, poor girl, the necessity of Mr. Latimer and herself having long *tête-à-têtes* in that quiet, old, sylvan region, where the poetry of nature and the poetry of a beautiful life were so harmoniously united, and which might lead—oh, so naturally!—to a union of spirit between themselves. Lady Jane Grey's study of Plato in those old woods, might so easily lead to a confession of the study she had devoted herself to, of works as noble as those of Plato!

"There is a little break in the clouds! I think it looks a little brighter!" said she, "what do you think, Agnes?"

Agnes thought so too; nay, there was even the faintest ray of sunshine! but then Mrs. Colville came in with her very natural recollection, that let the sun shine as it would, the mossy turf of the old park would be a very unfit carpet for the feet of any lady that day, to say nothing of sitting and singing on the grass.

"Just as well be one of Alderman Seales' cherubs," said her father, "and sit singing on a damp cloud!"

"Then I suppose it must be given up!" said Ada. "It is so very awkward," she continued, "one cannot tell whether one is expected or not. Perhaps Mr. Latimer may expect us to luncheon, and it is better to have half a pleasure than none."

"My dear!" returned her aunt, "it is impossible! It would look like perfect insanity in us. See, it rains



now faster than ever; and now," said she, looking at her watch, "it is half-past twelve."

It rained all day; there was a damp, chill, comfortless feeling in the house, which made people think of the delights of a fire as the day wore on. In the afternoon a servant came over from the Hays with a note from Mr. Latimer to Mrs. Colville, full of regrets for the untoward opposition of the elements, together with two remarkably fine pine-apples. The pinery at the Hays was noted for the fine quality of its fruit. Mrs. Colville read from the note that Mr. Latimer hoped that Ada would accept them. Heaven knows if the words were really in the note, for the old lady put it in her pocket as soon as she had finished it. Poor Ada! she almost forgave the rain.

"It's very pretty of Mr. Latimer to send Ada the handsome pines," said Mrs. Colville to her brother, as they all sat at tea together before a fire which was lighted in the little library. Ada divided one of the pines that evening among them. She was unusually lively and amiable.

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE next morning Tom Lawford made his appearance at home, and Mrs. Colville had a private conversation with her brother; but one subject is quite enough at a time, and we will take them in the order in which they occurred.

Tom received the congratulations of his family with a very well-satisfied mien; one little remark, however, of his father's disconcerted him.

"I consider," said he, "Miss Bolton a very charming girl, and perhaps a little too good for you; she has a handsome fortune and good connection: I have nothing to say against the match. It is time you got married, and you have my entire consent; but I had hoped, Tom, that you might have done your poor uncle some little justice by providing for his daughter amongst us. Rich women are not uncommon, nor handsome ones either, but such girls as Agnes are uncommon. But fathers must not choose for their sons; and so, God bless you, Tom, and give my love to Henrietta Bolton."

His voice was broken, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. His son seized his hand and grasped it, and left the room without speaking.

After he was gone, Mrs. Colville came in; and Tom, expecting to find her sister alone in the dining-room, went there, but Agnes was with her. He started; but, mastering the emotion, whatever it might be, which he felt, he said in a tolerably firm voice—"I am obliged to leave home again for a week; my business in London is unfinished; you can tell my aunt and my father—Good-bye!"

He had hardly glanced at Agnes; he did not speak to her. His conduct was natural, perhaps, but it troubled and distressed her.

"I must leave this place," again said she to herself, "this is his home, and I drive him from it!" She dreaded announcing her departure to her uncle; and indeed, to her, the parting from him was very grievous. But, however, this little incident with Tom decided her to a prompt and firm fulfillment of her duty. "When I go to him, after luncheon," she said, "I will tell him, when he and I are quite alone together."

In the meantime, as we said, Mrs. Colville is having an interview with him.

"Brother!" she began, seating herself beside him, almost before his nap was ended, "I have some little matters to talk over with you."

The old gentleman was a little out of humor, and a little out of spirits, and was not at all in a mood for an unpleasant communication; but, however, he was destined to have one made to him that day either by one party or by another, and there is no opposing one's destiny.

"I suppose that Agnes has not told you," she continued, "that she wants to leave us."

"No!" said he, "nor do I think that she does—why should she?"

"Yes, indeed," repeated she, "why should she? but however she does. Her mother, she tells me, and her uncle in Scotland, wish it; but that may be an excuse, as very likely it is, if they are rational people; for where amongst them can she have a home like this? the same advantages, and the same class of society? However, she tells me that she wishes to go, and that immediately!"

"It is very odd, and very unkind not to have mentioned it to me!" said her uncle; "I thought that she was fond of me; and I take it as very unkind—very unkind, indeed! What am I to do without her?"

"Very true," said Mrs. Colville, "and so I told her; I told her that she was behaving very ill. We offered her a comfortable home here; she has been treated just like one of the family, and you have been like a father to her—I told her all this. I am not at all pleased with her, for I consider that she had no more right to go away in this abrupt manner than a hired servant had!"

"Do not talk of it in that way," replied Mr. Lawford, sharply; "Agnes was not anything like a servant here! She is her own mistress, and if she can be happier away from us, we have no right to prevent her going—but, however, that is not what I expected from her—and I'll tell you what, Mrs. Colville, there's a something at the bottom of all this; there's a reason for it," said he, raising himself in his chair, and speaking with that energy which indicated a coming storm: "there's a something, Mrs. Colville, which I do not yet penetrate—somebody has been behaving ill to her! You behaved very ill yourself to her, about that ball at Merley Park; and," he continued, with an oath, "if her leaving us is caused by anyone behaving ill to her, I shall not readily forgive him, let it be who it may, Mrs. Colville!"

"Do not put yourself into a passion," said she, "I can explain it all to you."

"I will not see a fatherless girl wronged," continued he, without regarding her words, "much less my brother's daughter, and that I can tell you. There's a reason, I say, for her going, Mrs. Colville, and I'll know the bottom of it—I'll have her in here to your face, and know the bottom of it!"

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mrs. Colville, with a suddenly flushed countenance, "am I to be spoken to in this way? What's Agnes to me? Do you imagine that I plot, and cabal, and get up intrigues against her? Is this the return that I am to have for all my anxiety, and care, and thought, night and day, for your family? It is not kind of you, brother," said Mrs. Colville, assuming the voice and manner of an injured person.

Poor Mr. Lawford looked bewildered and dumb-founded; he knew not precisely what to say and therefore was silent; and Mrs. Colville, making use of the advantage she had gained, continued, "You are right in imagining there is some motive for her conduct, and a powerful one, too, and I'll tell you what it is. I was convinced that there was a something myself, and I have watched her narrowly—poor thing! she has lost her heart to her cousin! I saw how her countenance changed when Mr. Latimer mentioned Tom's engagement to Miss Bolton; and when you said that you wished he had chosen her, she looked ready to faint!"

"Poor, dear girl!" sighed her kind-hearted uncle.

"It is very unfortunate for her," continued Mrs. Colville, "for I am convinced that she is greatly attached to him; and I do not blame her so much for that, for Tom has fine qualities—and however much I blamed her at first for leaving us, I can now see reason for it, and I think we must not oppose it. Tom, as I said, has fine qualities; I have thought him much improved of late, and I fancy that he is much steadier; but when he was about being married that was natural."

"Poor thing!" sighed Mr. Lawford; "but I tell you what, Mrs. Colville," said he, again seeming to be on the verge of a passion, "if I can find out that my son has been trifling with her affections, he need not look for my forgiveness!"

"There is no danger of that," interposed she; "Tom knows what he is about; he has been thinking of no one but Henrietta Bolton, I will answer for it; and it is a pity that Agnes thought anything about him!"

Mrs. Colville made it all appear very intelligible to her brother, and very easy to be accounted for; but how much she herself was convinced of the truth of it we know not.

The rain continued; and, later in the afternoon, as Mr. Lawford could not go out, Agnes sat with him, intending to take an opportunity of breaking the painful subject to him. How kind he seemed to her, poor old gentleman! His heart was filled with such intense compassion for her. He had said many a time, that if he were a young man he should fall in love with her—he now wished that he had another son to give her. The truest proof, however, of the reality of his affection for her, was his willingness to part with her, seeing that the happiness of her life or the peace of her mind made the leaving Lawford needful for her; but she must not leave me altogether, thought he, pondering on the subject even in her presence—she must come back again to me—we will hope it is not so serious but that she may come back again! He looked at her tenderly without speaking, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"What is amiss, dear uncle?" asked she, "what distresses you?"

"I've heard it," replied he; "your Aunt Colville has told me, and it has cut me up sadly; but we must not be unreasonable with you; we must consider your own feelings."

Agnes was taken by surprise; but still it was a relief to find that she was spared making the painful disclosure. Her uncle had resolved, with feelings of true delicacy, not to let her know that of which her aunt had informed him regarding the state of her affections; but his heart was so full that it was next to impossible to conceal it.

"I hoped," said he, looking tenderly in her face, "that we had made you happy amongst us."

"You have, dear uncle," said she, rising to his side, and laying her arm on his shoulder as he liked her to do, "and I shall never forget your affection for me. You have been like a second father, and parting from you is like a repetition of my first sorrow"—she could not restrain her feelings and wept bitterly—she seated herself on the low seat beside him, on which she sat to read to him. He wept with her; he laid his hand upon her head as her own father used to do, and drew it tenderly to his knee; and thus they both sat for a long time in silence.

"You have been a daughter to me, Agnes," at length he said, "a very daughter. I owe you many pleasant hours. Old man as I am, I have been benefited by your conversation, by your example! I have sometimes thought that, like Abraham, unawares I have entertained an angel. May God Almighty bless you, my child, and reward you better than I can? may He bless with fulfillment every desire of you heart! Tell me, my child, is there anything I can do for you?"

Agnes said nothing; she clasped her uncle's hand in hers, and pressed it tenderly to her lips; but she could at that moment make no reply.

At length the old man raised himself in his chair, wiped his eyes, gave a husky cough, and showed that he was about to shake off the grief that oppressed him.

"Now, my love," said he, "let us talk rationally together. Is there anything which your old uncle can do for you?"

She replied that there was nothing.

"Then you must do something for me," said he; "you must not leave immediately; Ada always is engaged; I shall miss you greatly. I cannot part with you all at once; can you not wait yet a month?"

Agnes replied that it was her wish to go sooner.

"Well, a week," said he, remembering that his son

remained from home so long. I cannot part with you under a week! and promise me, moreover, that you will come again to me. I will not fix when; it shall be at your own time; when your own heart can bear it—or when you are disposed," added he, wishing to amend the expression; "but for me you cannot come too soon!"

The allusion which her uncle had twice made to the state of her own heart, troubled her; she feared that the true state of her feelings regarding Mr. Latimer was discovered—she blushed, and her uncle was all the more confirmed in his own belief.

"And even if you should never come back," said he, "write to me sometimes, and tell me about your brothers; the little fellow that has the Rutherford face, and Arthur. I wish we could have had them here! And then, when you marry let me know; and don't be in a hurry, Agnes, for there are few men who are worthy of you; but I should like to know, for I consider you as one of my own children; and if I can make you no better return, I can give you a dowry."

Again Agnes wept; she was questioning with herself whether after all she were justified in leaving him. "I will stay with you a week," said she, "and please God, when Ada is married to Mr. Latimer, and my cousin is married, then if he and his wife will have me for an inmate, I will come and be with you; for as to marrying myself, dearest uncle, I am not likely to do that."

"You shall come and live with me," said he, kissing her tenderly, and looking very much pleased. "I shall keep you to your word, spite of a whole clan of Scotsmen."

The rain, which had now continued for three or four days without much intermission, gave signs of clearing off, and the news that Miss Agnes Lawford was about to leave her uncle's circulated about till it reached the Hays.

The very morning after it reached Mr. Latimer, he rode over to Lawford. He had several reasons for going there just then; one of those we will state. His brother-in-law, Mr. Acton, was a great promoter of floriculture, especially among the people. The cottagers all round him were florists. One of the first things which he did three years before, when he purchased his little estate and began to lay out his grounds, before his house was built, was to establish in the neighborhood a floricultural society, from which prizes were to be given to the poor for their best flowers. Since he had resided in the neighborhood, his example had made the thing popular and fashionable also. The flower-shows were pleasant occasions of meeting, and the whole country round talked of them with interest and delight. It was now the time of auriculars and ranunculuses; and the little society was to hold its first meeting this season, in the lovely grounds belonging to Mr. Acton. The gentlemen of the neighborhood were to send green-house plants; a tent was to be erected in the grounds, as a sort of temple of Flora; and cards of invitation had been issued for above a fortnight. There was quite an excitement in that little country world about this occasion, which it was rumored was to be unusually splendid and interesting; and then came the rain and dashed everybody's hopes; the poor man's flowers, the rich people's show, and the whole country's pleasure! But in all cases there is a little cranny for hope to creep in at, and so it was now; people hoped that the weather would change with the change of the moon. The moon changed, and at that very time the most glorious weather began.

The Lawfords had all been invited to dine at the Actons', after the prizes were distributed; and now the ostensible motive of Mr. Latimer's visit had reference to this. The flower-show was in two days; he prophesied, of a certainty, fine weather, and he wished to engage the whole Lawford family to take luncheon at the Hays, as had been arranged on the unfortunate day of the proposed picnic. It was but a very little way out of their direct road, and his manner very clearly showed that he intended to have no refusal. Agnes had not seen him now for several days; the circumstance of the pine-apples being sent to Ada, trivial as it was, had satisfied her that her own imagination had given much greater importance to his attentions on the night of the rectory party, than there was any occasion for. She was going, she thought, so soon, that even the prospect of meeting Tom at the Actons'—for Mr. Latimer brought word that he was coming to London to be there—did not deter her from the wish to be this once of the party; yes, even if her own heart carried away with it a deeper anguish.

Mr. Latimer was in high spirits—very high. He spoke of Agnes' departure with surprise, but not at all with the air of one who was much interested in it. Ada thanked him for the pine-apples, and he was delighted, that she was pleased with them. Agnes inquired after the poor invalid in the caravan; he said that she was better, and would certainly recover; that that extraordinary preacher whom he had described the other evening, was preaching in the neighboring villages with very remarkable effect; that he seemed wonderfully attached to the beautiful child at the caravan, and that he himself had met him out on his little preaching excursions, with the child in his arms. Marchmont, he said, extraordinary as it might seem, appeared really quite a reformed man. He had been told, he said, by his gardener, how much astonishment this change in him had occasioned in the neighborhood, and that he had been to Leicester and taken the Temperance Pledge. He intended, he said, himself to have some talk with the preacher when he next came to Merley, or wherever he might meet with him. He said that he should like Agnes to see that beautiful child; in fact, he should like them all to see it.

"It must be that little founding child of ours!" exclaimed Ada, suddenly struck with the idea; "that poor founding which Mrs. Marchmont adopted. I told you of it the other evening," said Ada; "we must see it—poor little thing!"



The day of the flower-show came; the loveliest day of the whole year. It was all the more beautiful for the rain, said every one; and yet the day before had been so warm and bright, that all moisture seemed gone from the surface of the earth, so that even the most delicate lady need not fear to soil her satin slipper.

After breakfast, when everyone was alive with the thoughts of the day's pleasure, old Mr. Lawford surprised them all by saying, that he had half a mind to go with them, at least as far as the Hays. Dear old man! he wanted to have as much as he could of Agnes' company during the short remainder of her stay; but he did not say so; he only said, that as the day was so fine, and the carriage so easy, and his gout so much better, and as he could have his air-cushions and gout-stool, he did not see that the fatigue would be much more than that of his bath-chair; certainly it would not!

Everybody was delighted; it would please Mr. Latimer so very much; if he were tired he might stop at the Hays, and they would call for him in the evening. So they might, said he; but he thought that he very likely should go on as far as Mr. Acton's; he had never seen his cottage since it was finished. He said nothing about shaking hands with his new daughter-in-law-elect, although he thought of it; nor did Mrs. Colville—for even she, on this morning so auspicious to everyone, seemed quite disposed to avoid giving pain—"And if," added he old gentleman, suddenly thinking that perhaps seeing his son under such circumstances would be painful to her, "I should take it into my head to stop at the Hays till you return, Agnes, if she like, can stop with me. The Hays is a fine place, and we can get into the garden, or sit in the library; it's a fine room, and Mr. Latimer has the largest collection of books, and the best selection too the neighborhood!"

A messenger rode over from the Hays with Mr. Latimer's compliments, and begged, as the morning was so fine, they would be with him as early as possible.

"Bless me! what can be the meaning of this!" exclaimed Mrs. Colville, startled out of her usual quiet decorum.

The young ladies went up to dress; the carriage was ordered out; and dear old Mr. Lawford, quite talkative with his impromptu pleasure trip, took his seat with his gout-stool and his air-cushions, by the side of Mrs. Colville, who looked quite gracious. The space which Mr. Lawford required with his lame foot, caused there to be no room for Agnes. She therefore was obliged to go down to the rectory, that she might accompany Mr. and Mrs. Sam in their phaeton. Fortunately the rector and his lady were going to drive to Merley Park, to call on the Bridports, before they went to the Hays, and therefore the carriage was at the door, and they just setting out.

"I wonder what Latimer means by sending for you so much earlier," said Mr. Sam. "But it's lucky you came when you did, or in five minutes you would have been too late."

Mrs. Sam proposed that they should join her father's carriage, and drive at once to the Hays, that they might understand this mysterious hastening of the party; and thus it was decided.

Agnes had never been to the Hays; she had only seen its trees and its chimneys from a distance, and it was not without a certain trilling at her heart that she saw them drive in through the old gray lodge gates into the park-like grounds that surrounded the house. Agnes' state of mind on this day was something like that of a drunkard, who, seeing a carouse has begun, determines, reckless of consequences, to make a night of it. This was the last time she should see Mr. Latimer, this was the first time she had been at his home. There was a little romance for her heart; and, if she indulged it, let no moralist blame her too severely.

And now they got glimpses of the old, red brick house, with its gray stone quoigns and window-heads, and its stacks of handsome cross-banded chimneys, that gave character and dignity to the whole edifice. All was quiet and substantial, with an air of old, solid family-pride about it, that accorded with the long stretches of lawn scattered over with well-grown and almost venerable trees. And now the first carriage drew up at the door, and out came a grave servant to receive them. The sight of Mr. Lawford, however, brought out Mr. Latimer himself, who, delighted and astonished to see the old gentleman, gave him such a cordial welcome as did his heart good. And what a warm welcome they all had!

Everybody wondered why they were come a full hour earlier than had at first been named; and they were destined to wonder even more, for, scarcely were they seated in the handsome morning room, when Mr. Latimer, taking Agnes' hand, with a most peculiar expression of countenance, said, "Permit me!" and then led her out of the room.

"What is the meaning of this?" said everyone who remained.

"Permit me?" again said Mr. Latimer to Agnes, who, astonished and almost terrified, looked at him with wondering eyes. But nothing more was needed—the library door burst open, and two boys at once caught Agnes in their arms.

"Here we are!" exclaimed they: "aren't you surprised? You never thought to find us here!"

Poor Agnes! nor did she indeed; and with these exclamations they drew their astonished sister with them into the library, and shut the door.

Mr. Latimer explained to his guests his extraordinary conduct: he wished, he said, to give Miss Agnes Lawford a pleasure. He had perceived her great affection for her brothers; the poor boys had nowhere to go in the holidays; he knew the gentleman with whom they were; and not fearing to obtain consent from everyone, he ventured, as the time was short, to write at once for them—and their being here would prevent Miss Agnes leaving Lawford so soon.

Poor old Mr. Lawford was quite affected, he wiped his eyes, and, offering his hand to Mr. Latimer, shook his cordially—"This was worth coming out to hear! and you have done me a great pleasure!" said he.

Mr. Latimer smiled on the kind-hearted old gentleman, and told him farther, that his son, Mr. Tom Lawford, who was returning from London for this flower-show, had promised to take charge of them; in fact, he said, Tom had had the boys with him two or three days in London, and they had almost turned one another's heads.

"How charming," said Ada, "and how much it will please Agnes, and how very thoughtful it was of you!"

Again old Mr. Lawford was seen to wipe his eyes. "Thank you, Mr. Latimer," again said he; and, taking up the former idea, added, "and I don't think that now she will leave us so soon. It is a pity she is going at all, is it not?"

But he received no answer, for Mrs. Colville inquired, at the same moment, whether they seemed nice boys, these brothers of Agnes.

"How poorly you are looking, Agnes dear!" said Harry, with his arm on her shoulder, as they all three sat together on a sofa in the library; "I thought that you would be looking quite rosy with living in the country," said he, as if a little disappointed with her appearance.

"There, now, tears are in her eyes again!" exclaimed Arthur: "I never saw such a girl in all my life; when I'm glad I never cry!"

"I know you don't," said Agnes, again smiling, and clasping them both to her heart; "but this is so unlooked-for, so very kind, I really know not what to say—to me it seems more like a dream!" Again she embraced them. She made them stand up before her, and go to a distance; she looked at them behind and before; she laid her hand on their heads to see if they were grown; she saw how well they looked, how happy; she saw the resemblance in them to her father and her mother; and she thanked God, with a full heart, that they were her brothers, and that thus they met!

"Do you know," said Harry, with glowing cheeks, "that Mr. Latimer has all papa's works—the very best edition, all beautifully bound? Come, I'll show you them."

"Never mind books now!" said Arthur. "Let's have your bonnet off! There's a sweet sister! Now you look better," said he. "Oh, Harry, she's a very pretty girl, for all you said just now!"

Harry wanted to justify himself, but Arthur was impatient to hear about the people at Lawford,—"And don't you think Mr. Tom Lawford is a nice fellow, and Mr. Latimer?"

"And who do you think we saw last night?" exclaimed Arthur, leaving his sister no chance of talking herself. "Why, we saw Mr. Jeffkins—positively and truly Mr. Jeffkins, and nobody else?"

"He was so astonished to see us," said Harry, taking advantage of a little pause which his brother had made. "There's a little sort of common just by, and a sort of ladder-stile, which leads over the park fence to it; we just mounted up to look over, and what should we see but poor Mr. Jeffkins, sitting among the heath, reading his Bible. He was so astonished, he looked as if he could hardly believe his eyes. He asked a deal about you, and we told him you were coming here in the morning, and you did not know that we were here, and you were going to be so surprised!"

"And did you tell him?" asked Agnes anxiously, "that you had been in town with Mr. Tom Lawford?"

"Yes, we did," returned Harry, "we told him all about it, and everything."

"And what did he say?" inquired she.

"Oh, I don't know—nothing particular."

"Now, don't let us sit here all day," said Arthur; "this middle window opens—I know all over the garden."

"And it is such a lovely garden," said Harry, "and there are such flowers!"

"First of all," said Agnes, "I must take you to my uncle and my cousin Ada; and with a brother on each arm, and a countenance beaming with love and happiness, she presented them to her relations.

Everyone sympathized with her. Ada was charmed with the boys, and so was her father; and Mrs. Colville remarked that Arthur was certainly both handsome and gentlemanly, and that Harry was a complete Rutherford.

Mr. Latimer's eyes followed Agnes wherever she went; and a much less interested observer than either Ada or her aunt would have seen at a glance that he was a deeply enamored lover. Some little consciousness of his marked attention very soon forced itself upon her; and then Ada's quiet manner and thoughtful countenance fixed it deeper on her mind.

"I am doomed unwittingly and unwillingly to be a trouble to them all," thought she, "and what atonement am I ever to make to Ada, if this really be so?" She determined through the rest of the day to avoid him; to remain with her brothers, to occupy herself with them, and to make of them her shield and defense. She was now angry with herself, for having permitted her heart to indulge in one truant fancy. "Every weakness, every error," said she to herself, "brings its own reward of sorrow, and of repentance!"

In the meantime, Mr. Latimer was neither negligent nor indifferent towards Ada: nothing could be more courteous or even friendly, than his behavior to her; but she saw plainly, as she had seen before, that she had no longer empire in his heart. The very circumstance for which the whole party was brought there an hour earlier was to give Agnes pleasure. It was to Ada the complete bursting of the golden bubble; the *fata morgana* of love had all vanished, and the cold and hard reality of life lay like a barren desert before her!

The kindness which Tom Lawford had shown to her brothers, made it now no longer difficult for Agnes to meet him. What a wonderful virtue there is in kind-

ness. She did not even express a wish to stay at the Hays, although her uncle preferred doing so. He was afraid, he said, of the ten miles farther; so he was carefully cushioned in an easy chair in the library and left to take his nap and amuse himself till dinner, when Mr. Latimer promised him that his old acquaintance, the Vicar of Merley, should come and dine with him, promising that on their way to the Actons' he would call at the vicarage, to make this arrangement for him. Agnes and her brothers, who were not to be divided, were to be driven in Mr. Latimer's carriage, and Mr. Latimer himself was to accompany Ada and her aunt. The arrangement outwardly seemed good and satisfactory.

A great deal of company had already arrived at the cottage; nothing could look gayer, or more beautiful than the grounds; and the cavalry band, which was a very good one, played at intervals. It was quite a fairy-land scene. The grounds at the cottage were extensive, and laid out in the finest taste; there was wood and water within their boundary, and ample space for rambling and solitude here and there, fit for any love-scene whatever.

With her brothers at her side, Agnes felt not the slightest embarrassment in meeting her cousin; the most friendly understanding seemed to exist between them. She thanked him for all the kindness he had shown to her brothers; he praised her brothers as the most interesting and intelligent lads he had ever seen. In the course of the afternoon, however, Tom took an opportunity of sending the boys to row a little boat across the lake, and then asked Agnes to walk with him to see them. It was the quietest and most secluded walk in the whole demesne which Tom took her, and she leaned on his arm quite familiarly. At length Agnes ventured to express to him the pleasure his proposed alliance with Miss Bolton gave her—the subject was a delicate one, but still she ventured to touch it.

"I dare say," said he, "it seems to you a strangely hurried affair; and so it is—but it is all right. The only fault is, that Henrietta is too good for me; and so were you, dear Agnes," said he: "God knows how I want still to have a deal of talk with you. They tell me you are going—I am sorry for it; if, however, it is on my account, I promise you in no way to displease or annoy you. You are very dear to me, Agnes—and your visit in our family has had a strange influence on me; but I think I told you that before. But however, Agnes, go where you may, I shall always be your friend; and if I am ever worthy of Henrietta it is owing to you—I have told her so already—and my prayer is, that you may meet with a husband more worthy of you than I am, and who may love you as well as I should have done!"

"Do not let us talk so, dear cousin," said Agnes, "but we will always be friends."

"That we will," said Tom, emphatically. "And there is a foolish little thing, which I must mention to you," said he. "I gave you those jet ornaments—I had been foolish enough to make your wearing them or not; an omen for my heart, on that evening of my sister's party. I was very disagreeable that night to you. I was disappointed and annoyed; but, however, that is past. And now will you accept those ornaments from me, as an atonement? I wish that they were worthier."

"If it were only a rosebud," said Agnes, quite touched by his conduct, "I would treasure it for your sake!"

"Here, then," said Tom, "the subject ends forever between us."

"It does," returned Agnes, "but we are friends forever."

Ada and Mr. Latimer walked arm in arm up and down the long shadowy pleached walk that ran the whole length of the garden. People saw them and avoided the walk, for all the world believed them to be lovers. But their conversation, whatever it might be, only left Ada graver and more thoughtful; the true feelings of her heart, however, were concealed under her coldest and proudest demeanor. She received everywhere the homage of her beauty, and George Bridport, who would only have been too happy to have carried her lap-dog, was ten times over her slave. The world said, however, that Ada Lawford was not in her most amiable humor that day. If it had said that a blight had fallen on her youth and her life that day, it would have been much truer.

"What two handsome boys these are!" exclaimed many a one as they saw Arthur and Harry, with their bright and joyous countenances, which bore, in their characteristic difference of expression, a resemblance to morning and evening.

"These are Mr. Frank Lawford's sons," said one to another, among the company, "and that young lady in mourning, is his daughter."

"How interesting looking they are!" was the reply; and for the sake of Mr. Frank Lawford, with his world-wide reputation, people wished to notice them; and many a poor man, too poor to buy his works, but who had known them well by newspaper extracts, or by some stray well-worn volume, which had fallen into their hands, and thenceforth became a text-book to their little circle, looked after them with a sentiment, more akin to reverence, than if they had been the queen's own offspring.

In the evening, when the company was all gone, and dinner was over, and coffee had been sipped, and people had chatted, and talked over all the affairs of the day, Mrs. Colville who, she hardly knew why, was not quite satisfied with several things, began to be impatient to return. The boys, however, were out; and Tom, who was to return with them to the Hall, was not to be found; and then, when they were found, it was discovered that Agnes and Mr. Latimer were missing.

It was just like collecting a stray flock of sheep.

"You see how reluctant our friends are to leave us," said Mrs. Acton, smiling. "I wish you would follow their example."



But Mrs. Colville could neither smile nor follow their example; besides which, and that was very unpleasant to her, Mrs. Acton seemed so provokingly indifferent about having her brother and Agnes sought after. They could not be far off, she said; they would soon be making their appearance, and it really was very early.

At length Harry, to whom Mrs. Colville appealed, said that he had seen them down by the waterside, just when he and his brother were bringing up the boat to the shore—that was half a mile off, he said, and he should not wonder if they were there still.

It was proposed to send Harry to seek him; and then, just at that very moment, in walked Agnes and Mr. Latimer following her. Everybody's eyes were upon them. It looked very suspicious, but no one said anything; the carriages were waiting.

Tom rode on horseback; and the party returned to the Hays according to the arrangement of the morning. Before they drove off from the cottage, Ada heard Mrs. Acton beg of Agnes to come and spend some time with her before she left the country; she would have, she said, her brothers there, and she was sure that they could make the time pass very pleasantly. Whatever Agnes' answer might be, Ada did not hear it. Mr. Latimer with great courtesy begged to hand her to the carriage, and Agnes was left to Mr. and Mrs. Acton, who seemed overflowing with kindness to her. It seemed almost as if Agnes had supplanted her with these old friends.

The boys talked all the way they went; nothing could equal the flow of their spirits. It was well for Agnes that they were all-sufficient for themselves, for she had more to think of that evening than she had ever had to think of before.

Mr. Latimer had asked her to go and see an evening primrose of remarkable beauty; and then perhaps forgetting the flower altogether, he had led her on and on into the far shrubbery, where, without preamble of any kind, he had made such a straight-forward, candid, and manly declaration of love as left the question for whom were his attentions no longer in doubt.

Oh, if Agnes could only have acted from the impulses of her own heart how easy would have been the answer; but a sense of honor, and of delicacy towards her cousin, made the answer which her heart dictated impossible.

She hesitated; she would not speak a falsehood; she dared not speak the truth. She felt exactly as Mrs. Colville had always done, that Mr. Latimer was not a man to be trifled with; but how was she to explain even her hesitation without betraying her cousin?

"I was told," at length she said, "even before I came to Lawford, that you were engaged to my Cousin Ada; and, to speak the truth, I have always regarded you as destined for her."

"There was a time," replied Mr. Latimer, "I will not deny it, when my heart pleaded very warmly for Ada; but in her I found not all that I required in a wife. Two years absence from England confirmed still more my earlier opinions regarding women. I returned cured of my passion, which, for some time before I left, I had sufficient reason to consider hopeless. I returned sobered in many respects, and two years older in feeling. The very day after my return I met you; you were the realization of all my hopes and requirings; since that moment my mind has never wavered, nor doubted the wisdom of its choice. I know my own character, Agnes, and I believe also that I know something of yours—enough, at least, to convince me that we are in all respects suited to each other; we have tastes and feelings in common, the same views in life. Where then is the cause for demur or doubt?"

"It is," said Agnes, "like pleading against my own happiness; almost like ingratitude to Heaven to oppose what you say. But do not require from me at this moment a definite answer; I was not prepared for this. I feel that much is to be considered—weighed. There are many consequences which I can foresee, and which I dread. I feel as if this were a happiness not meant for me, and which I have no right to."

"Enough, enough!" said Latimer, well pleased by what she had said; "for I know after this, and of a certainty, that you will be my own dear Agnes; permit me only to speak to your uncle."

In the hands of Mr. Latimer it seemed to Agnes as if it would be hurried on too fast.

"No, no," said she, peremptorily, "my answer is not an assent. You not what you are about—much, very much is yet to be thought of. I cannot tell what my uncle would say—I know not even what he ought to do regarding it. No one, not even myself, has been prepared for this."

Such an interview as this might well make both Agnes and Mr. Latimer silent in their respective carriages on their drive back to the Hays.

"How remarkably silent—almost stupid Mr. Latimer is to-night," whispered Mrs. Colville to Ada, as they sat in the carriage at the door of the Hays, waiting for Mr. Lawford, who was now to join them. Mr. Latimer brought out the old gentleman, who seemed amazingly merry; the old vicar was with him, and they seemed quite reluctant to part. He was assisted into the carriage; his gout-stool and his air-cushions were settled to his mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Colville had driven home immediately after dinner, and now Agnes had to return home in the rumble behind the carriage. The boys found it very amusing to help her up to her seat; Mr. Latimer offered her his hand at parting—the very touch thrilled her to the heart.

"Good-night! good-night!" rang from the lips of the merry-hearted boys. "We shall come up to Lawford to-morrow!"

"Do; there are good fellows!" returned Mr. Lawford, and the carriage drove away.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE day was ended; an important day to three of our party. Every one, even Mr. Lawford, seemed tired, and all immediately retired for the night.

Ada exchanged not a word with her cousin; but, as Agnes sat in her chamber a full hour after midnight yet dressed, pondering with an anxious and deeply foreboding mind on the decided turn which events had taken, again the door opened which divided her bedroom from her cousin's, and Ada, pale as marble, and looking almost as rigid, stood in the doorway, and said in a sad and solemn voice, "Come into this room; I have something to say to you!"

With somewhat the feeling of a criminal, and yet with a heart ready almost to give up life for her sake, Agnes obeyed; and, as she had done on a former occasion, seated herself on the sofa beside her.

"I have much to say to you," said Ada; "much which concerns your peace and mine, and the sooner it is said the better. You have proved yourself worthy of my confidence; you never betrayed my former confession even to Mr. Latimer. I thank you! you have not caused me to lose my own self-respect. A weak character, with your generous feelings, thinking to have served me with Mr. Latimer, would have betrayed me to him. How much I thank you for not having done so! Had Mr. Latimer's heart inclined to me, even in the smallest degree, no confession of any kind would have been needed; as it did not, such a confession must only have been humiliating to me. The time when he could become attached to me, has long been passed; I cherished false hopes, and like every other false thing they punished their possessor. I must bear the punishment because I doubt not my former folly deserved it. For you a better lot is in store, because you have deserved it. Do not interrupt me, Agnes," said she, seeing her cousin about to speak. "I am in no humor, I assure you, for bandying about compliments; and I say nothing but the barest truth to-night. Let me speak, and do not interrupt me, for I have as much upon my heart as it will bear!"

"I have for some time suspected," continued she, "that I had no longer any hold upon Mr. Latimer's heart; but that which we hold dear as life, we part with reluctantly. To-day has set the question at rest. Mr. Latimer has declared his love to you; do not deny it!"

"I do not deny it!" said Agnes. "And you love him; neither can you deny that!" Both remained silent; anguish oppressed the hearts of both; but for the one there was hope, for the other none; and yet at that moment, it would have been hard to say which suffered the most.

"I could almost wish," said Agnes, at length, "that I had never come to Lawford; I have been like a dark cloud between you and your happiness. I feel as if it were almost an insult to say even that I love you, and yet I would give up all for you!"

"You must love me still," said Ada; "deprived of your affection I should be very forlorn. You must love me still! you must not desert me, for my heart has suffered shipwreck! But I am not going to make a spectacle of myself," said she, speaking in her natural tone; "I want no one's pity. You have proved to me how well you deserve my confidence, and therefore I place still more, still greater confidence in you. Do not regret that you came amongst us. I have found in you the realization of that high principle, and that single-hearted goodness which your father's works teach, and I have learned more from you even than from them."

These words seemed to humble Agnes; she felt as if she must sink down at Ada's feet; but, feeling that words and actions at that time expressed so little, she answered her only by silence, which is often so expressive.

"I have gone through a great deal," continued Ada, "as you may believe; a great deal in a very short time. This day—what has it not revealed to me, what has it not taught me! And Agnes, in the same way as my heart feels warmly, my mind decides rapidly. My plans are all formed; the line of conduct which I must pursue is already marked out, and I have already entered upon it. Late as it was, I had just returned from an interview with my father when I came to you."

"With your father," repeated Agnes, both amazed and alarmed.

"I told him," continued Ada, "what I had discovered of Mr. Latimer's sentiments towards you; and I have won from him his entire approbation."

The generosity of this conduct, knowing what self-sacrifice it involved, overpowered Agnes. She covered her face with her hands, and wept; inwardly beseeching God to bless, and strengthen, and comfort one who had acted so unselfishly, so nobly.

"Ah, Ada!" said Agnes, "how much more noble, how much more admirable are you than I! and yet, I will not deny it," said she, "I, too, was capable of making a sacrifice for you. Let me confess also, I wished to leave Lawford that I might not interfere with your happiness! I now feel poor, in that I can do nothing for you."

"You can do much for me!" returned Ada. "A time will come when I, perhaps, may not be as strong as I now am; a time when I may say, even as Christ did, let this cup pass from me! then, be you the angel that will stand by me and strengthen me!"

Agnes folded her cousin in her arms, and wept on her bosom.

(THE END.)

"I have formed plans, as I told you," continued Ada, "which will require strength to carry out. I shall go to India to my brother; he loves me tenderly; we shall be dear to each other as husband and wife. The preparations for this long journey, a journey which has many attractions for me, and which, under happier circumstances, would be very seductive to my imagination, will be very useful to me—will take me out of myself—will, in fact, be my salvation. I shall now, from this time, look to India as to my home, and center the true love of my heart upon my brother. I will have no one's pity, Agnes—the world is to know nothing but that it is my pleasure or my whim to go abroad. I will see you married before I leave, and I myself will be your bridesmaid. And now, one thing more, and I have done—keep in the innermost recesses of your heart the knowledge of that which I did for Mr. Latimer's sake. It is enough that the benefit of that discipline of mind, the blessing of your father's teaching, through his works, will be my reward, and will support me, by the blessing of God, through every trial and every sorrow! And now, good-night!"

"I shall not leave you," said Agnes, "until I have seen your head upon your pillow."

Ada consented. Agnes smoothed for her the pillow, and laid her throbbing temples upon it; and then, drawing the curtains, sat down beside her till she slept.

It was a feverish and disturbed sleep, and was the precursor of a long and sad sickness. We, however, will not dwell upon it. The most untiring love and devotion watched by her and tended her; and youth, and youth's strength, bore her through it.

Three months afterwards, in the month of September, she sat, for the first time, once more in the little library at tea with her father. Poor old gentleman! how glad he was to see her again beside him! Neither he nor the world knew exactly what was the cause of her great illness. Many people supposed that she had taken cold at the flower-show. Mrs. Colville strenuously supported this idea; Ada, she said, was delicate, the ground was damp after the great rains that there had been, and that dear Ada's illness was no more than she expected. Some people have such certain foreknowledge of everything!

It was not known, beyond the immediate members of the Lawford and Latimer families, for some months, that Mr. Latimer was the betrothed lover of the niece instead of the daughter of the old squire. People were very much astonished when this knowledge first began to circulate among them; but it was singular how very soon everybody was satisfied that it was quite in the proper order of things; and this was only the more strengthened, because the whole family, and even Ada herself, seemed well pleased. But greater still was their astonishment, when the news went abroad that Ada was going out to India, although not until after the two marriages, that of her brother Tom and of her cousin Agnes, were celebrated.

And what said Mrs. Colville and her coadjutor, Mrs. Sam, all this time? They said enough for everybody else, had they all been silent; but then they had sense enough to express very little dissatisfaction to the world, seeing that they whom it most concerned had settled all so resolutely before they were consulted.

"When my sweet Ada is gone," Mrs. Colville, however, said to her acquaintance, "and my nephew has brought home his new wife, I shall leave the Hall. I do not know what will become of my poor brother when I am gone," said she; "but, new men, new measures; and my brother is not what he used to be. Poor man! he has taken strange crotchets into his head. He talks of sending for that preaching fellow, Jeffkins to the Hall—I hope, by the bye, that he is no relation to that creature who lived with Mrs. Sam! and he has actually had that child there that Mrs. Marchmont took out of the work-house, and has been sending Mrs. Marchmont jellies and such things! Poor man! his mind is certainly sadly impaired; it is my opinion that he hardly knows what he does; however, I leave all that—for there will be a change, I know, when the mistress comes!"

"And then, at the Hays, what a change, to be sure! and, between you and me, I do not think Mr. Latimer at all improved by his two years' absence from England; he has been in the West Indies among the slaves, and in America among the democrats, and he has brought home some extraordinary notions; and he is, with all his great abilities, a dogged, determined man, whom there is no turning. I have very much altered my opinion about Mr. Latimer! However, that is neither here nor there; and I am told that new furniture is ordered for the drawing-room. He has had a London upholsterer and decorator down, and is laying out a deal of money; and yet he gets not a penny with his wife! Poor Ada's picture, that she leaves Agnes as her parting present, is to hang there. They have all been and chosen the place. It seemed to me—God knows why!—as if they were going to choose the place where she was to be buried! a beautiful picture she makes! We have had Pickersgill down for a whole month; he paints one for her father, too, and I must have a handsome miniature. A beautiful creature she is, only a little paler than she was; and so cheerful—it's quite wonderful! But she's a real angel; and it is a pity that she must leave old England!"

"And then I hear, too, that Mr. Frank Lawford's widow is to come out of Scotland to see her daughter married. Bless me! who would have thought of Frank's daughter being Mrs. Latimer of the Hays!"



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